BUSES WORLDWIDE

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In this issue: Fuerteventura ; Two Southern Cities ; French Riviera ; Duple in India ; Across the Sahara ; Eastern Germany ; The Netherlands ; Azerbaijan & Nakhchivan

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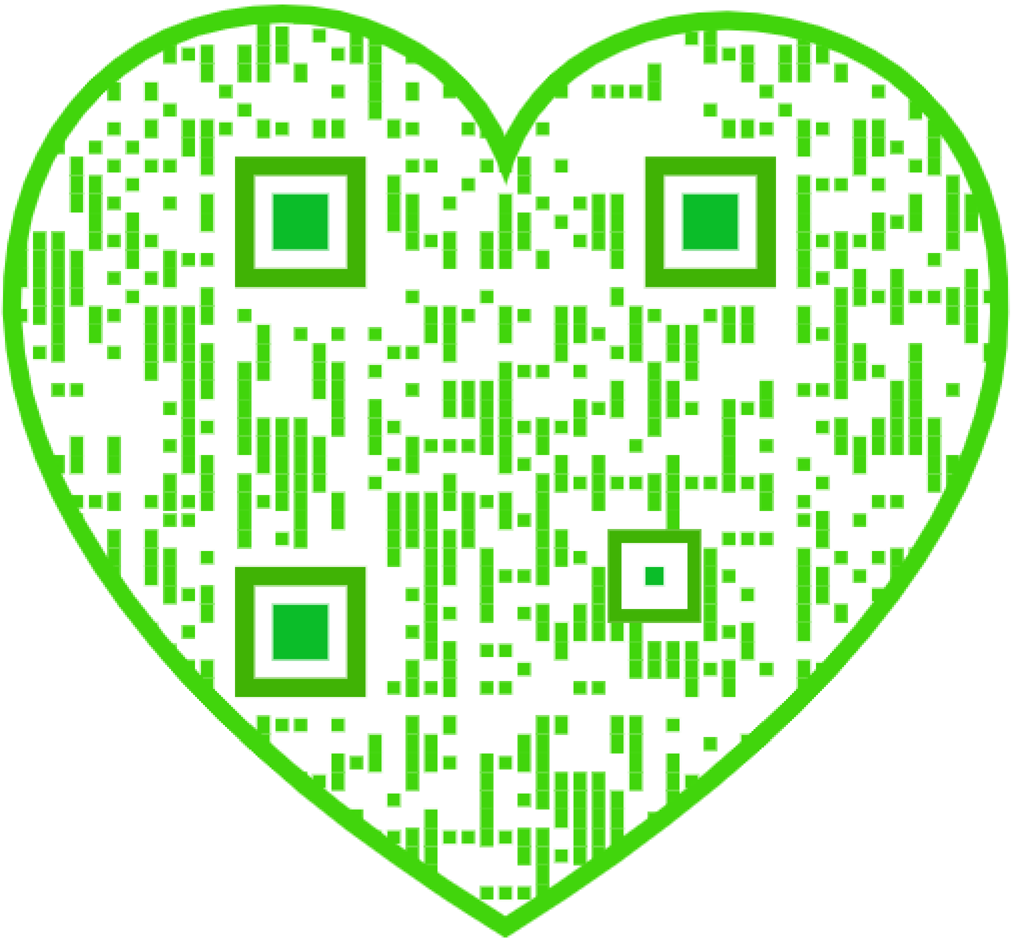

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IMPORTANT NOTES

The opinions and views expressed by authors and contributors within Buses Worldwide magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or Management Committee of Buses Worldwide. Reproduction of any material within the magazine is forbidden without first seeking permission in writing from the Chairman - details above.

FRONT COVER: Azienda Municipalizzata Trasporti (AMT) Genova E322 (GK-274CT) is an Irizar ieBus on Piazza del Portello having emerged from Galleria Giuseppe Garibaldi. Similar E312 (GC-815DP) can be seen entering the tunnel that passes under Palazzo Albini which is visible above it. The vehicles are equipped with five lithium-ion battery packs, all housed on the roof, giving a total power of 375 kWh nominal and are charged overnight in the depot. **MICHAL DEKÁNEK**

ABOVE: The Safari Zoo in Dvůr Králové nad Labem in East Bohemia has been running an authentic safari experience in open buses among animals imported from Africa for several decades. At first, specially adapted Ikarus 280 articulated buses were used there, and since 2012 two specially adapted Iveco Crossway LE CITY 12M buses have been in operation. These buses have only one door and open sides with no windows and 53 seats. **ZDENĚK KRESA**

EDITORIAL - YOU MUST READ THIS

Buses Worldwide Crisis!!

Buses Worldwide is our magazine. It is produced by volunteers for our membership – that is you readers!

Buses Worldwide issue 236 contained an appeal for volunteers for the posts of **Webmaster** and **Secretary**. The Webmaster's post became available following the sudden and unexpected death of Alan Moore last Summer. He did a good job for a good number of years and is sorely missed. I will have been Secretary of the society for 21 years by this year's AGM (30th May) and have decided to retire due to advancing years and to make way for some new thinking in the society.

The Webmaster's job is to look after the BWW website including the photo gallery and the Secretary runs meetings, books the BWW stall into rallies and generally administers the society. Job descriptions are available for both posts.

So far no-one has come forward for either of these posts. I cannot stress enough that these are both essential jobs if the magazine is to continue being produced. Surely there are people among our membership who would feel able to do either (or both) of these jobs! Please let me know as soon as possible if that could be you.

There is another threat to the future of the magazine, one that is being experienced by many societies and magazines in many fields: that of declining membership. This mostly due to an ageing membership and the death of members, but also as younger people are less inclined to join societies and read magazines when so much information is available on the internet. Buses Worldwide membership reached it's zenith around 2008 and since then has been in slow decline. At this rate, we will have to decide, in the next few years, whether it is economic to continue. This might be somewhere that members can make a difference, by introducing and recommending the magazine to enthusiast friends. It is my experience that enthusiasm for buses in countries other than their own, often comes later in life, when they have done some travelling. Perhaps you can introduce them to Buses Worldwide, the travelling enthusiasts companion.

I entreat you, please help to keep Buses Worldwide, and our companion magazine British Buses Abroad, in publication by volunteering for one of the posts and/or by spreading the word around the world.

Simon Brown
Secretary, Buses Worldwide

LEFT: RATP (Paris) 2038 is a Bolloré Bluebus SE, new in 2024. It is seen passing another of the same type in Place de la Bastille on a cold and misty day in January 2025. **MICHAL DEKÁNEK**

Buses Worldwide [BWW] was founded in 1982 to bring together people with an interest in buses all over the World. It exists to promote information about buses and bus operation in all countries outside the United Kingdom. It is run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts, many of whom work in operating companies or bus manufacturers, but membership is open to anyone interested in bus transport. BWW has members and contributors in every continent. The organisation has two groups within it, Buses Worldwide and British Buses Abroad [BBA]. Members can belong to one or both groups and each group has its own magazine.

Fuerteventura by Mike Taylor

511
TIADHE
MAN
2074 MDZ

ABOVE: Tiadhe displaying route 511 which is not listed in the official timetable, however the bus is at Morra Jable bus station in new liveried MAN reg: 2074 MDZ fleet no: 101. (All photos by the author)

INTRODUCTION

Beach holidays have never been my thing, but over the years, thanks to my long-suffering partner, I have begun to slightly appreciate the benefits of sometimes going on a beach holiday, so when 'she' said lets go to Fuerteventura I tried to sound enthusiastic thinking hard about what I knew about the bus and coach industry on the island, the answer being absolutely nothing.

The Canary Islands is this group of seven Spanish islands located in the Atlantic Ocean just off the coast of West Africa. It is an autonomous region of Spain split into two provinces Las Palmas de Gran Palma (Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote) and Santa Cruz de Tenerife (La Palma, Tenerife, La Gomera, El Hierro). The Canary Islands are politically within the European Union, however, they are outside the EU customs territory and VAT area. Each island has its own dominant stage carriage bus operator, as listed below. The residential population figures have to be a little suspect on holiday tourist islands like the Canary Islands as some could be second homes, plus during the summer season tourist numbers swell, which affect bus usage significantly.

Major Bus Operators of the Canary Islands 2023

Island	Pop	Size	Major bus operator	Routes	Fleet
Gran Canaria	865,070	602 sq. mi (1560 sq. km)	Global	118	308
Gomera	22,426	142 sq. mi (370 sq. km)	Guagua Gomera	7	19
Lanzarote	156,112	326 sq. mi (845 sq. km)	Intercity Bus Lanzarote (Arrecife Bus)	36	N/A
Fuerteventura	119,732	640 sq. mi (1660 sq. km)	TIADHE (Transportes A. D. Hernandez)	18	45
Tenerife	996,354	785 sq mil (2034 sq. km)	TITSA	180	610
Hierro	10,968	103 sq mi (268 sq. km)	TransHierro	12	N/A
La Palma	85,840	272 sq mi (708 sq. km)	Transporte Insular Las Palma	21	59

FUERTEVENTURA ISLAND

The island of Fuerteventura is part of the Spanish Canary Islands and approximately 16miles (25km) wide by 62miles (100km) long and has a total land area of 649 sq. miles (1,660 sq.km). The geographical terrain is not particular bus operational challenging with a maximum elevation of 144ft (44m). Fuerteventura is about the size of Hertfordshire with a population slightly larger than Winchester, with an estimated residential population of 122,629. The island has its own local government, the Cabildo de Fuerteventura which exercises a level of authority in the matters of health, environment, culture, sports, industry, roads, drinking water and irrigation, hunting and fishing licensing, museums, beaches, public transport and land organization, and imposes taxes. The Cabildo Fuerteventura decided to franchise stage carriage bus routes to a single private bus business. Through its agency Tiadhe it franchised the bus network to Group 1844 S.L. and subsequently its subsidiary Transportes Antonio Diaz Hernandez S.L. based on Fuerteventura using the registered trademark TIADHE which is an abbreviation for Transportes Interurbanos Antonio Diaz Hernandez.

Fuerteventura Bus Routes Operated by Tiadhe 2023 with daily frequency

01 Puerto del Rosario – Antigua – Gran Tarajal – Costa Calma – Morro Jable 14x 05h00 - 22h45 64m (103km)
02 Puerto del Rosario – Tefia – Betancuria – Vega de Rio Palmas 2x 12h00 - 18h300 21m (34km)
03 Puerto del Rosario – Hospital – Airport – El Matorral – Caleta de Fuste – Las Salinas 29x 07h00 - 23h00 9m (15km)
04 Pajara – La Pared – Costa Calma – Morro Jable 1x in each direction 21m (34km)
05 Costa Calma – Playa Barca – Los Canarios – Morro Jable 10x 07h45 - 15h30 20m (32km)
06 Puerto del Rosario – Parque Holandes – Los Hoteles – Corralejo 18x 06h30 - 22h45 22m (35km)
07 Puerto del Rosario – Tetir – Tindaya – La Oliva – Corralejo – El Cotillo 3x 0h00 - 20h00 28m (45km)
08 Corralejo – Villaverde – La Oliva – Lajares – El Cotillo 4x 07h30 - 14h15 21m (33km)
09 Pajara – Toto – Tuineje – Gran Tarajal – Costa Calma – Morro Jable 1 in each direction 49m (79km)
10 Puerto del Rosario – Airport – Caleta de Fuste – Gran Tarajal – La Lajita – Costa Calma – Morro Jable 3x 09h00- 20h30 62m (100km)
11 Tuineje – Las Rosas – El Cardon – Marco Sanchez – La Lajita 1 in each direction 42m (68km)
12 Gran Tarajal – Health Centre – Las Playitas 17x 07h30 - 22h15 4m (7km)
14 Puerto del Rosario – Los Estancos – El Time 2x 08h15 - 13h30 6m (9km)
15 Puerto del Rosario – Triquivijate 1 in each direction 14m (22km)
16 Gran Tarajal – Tuineje – Tiscamanita – Agua de Bueyes – Valle de Ortega – Antigua – Triquivijate – Nuevo Horizonte – El Matorral – Airport – Playa Blanca – Hospital – Puerto del Rosario 10x 0h00 - 20h45 38m (61km)
18 Pajara – Cuchillete – Gran Tarajal 1 in each direction 27m (44km)
25 Morro Jable – Costa Calma – La Lajita 1 in each direction 36m (56km)
111 Morro Jable – Puertito de la Cruz – Cofete 4×4 Bus 2x 10h00 & 14h00 25m (40km) [See back cover of BWW236]

The above bus timetable analysis relates only to regular through daily (Monday to Friday) services. During the weekdays there are a number of short turns on most routes, plus additional departures for public school route departures, festa's and holiday services, so the above is the minimum weekday bus timetable. The on-line bus timetables are not the easiest to understand or very informative in that they only provide the departure time, no intermediatory stops or the arrival time at the final stop. Unfamiliar travellers to Fuerteventura cannot calculate their time and journey duration, or their specific bus stop location, all in all a little unhelpful.

GRUPO 1844 BACKGROUND

My first bit of background research identified Grupo 1844 (Group 1844), what a brilliant corporate name, much more imaginative than Stagecoach plc or First Group plc. The origins of Group 1844 were sourced from one of the founder's car licence plates which was an American Buick from thirty-two years ago. The Buick belonged to the current manager's great-grandfather and was believed to be a milk transporter. The first Grupo 1844 business was Taller Los Rios (Taller translates as workshop) and the family continue to be involved in the transport group. The purchase of the dedicated bus led to the formation of the company Transportes Antonio Diaz Hernandez over time through organic growth and acquisition then and now has a fleet of over 600 passenger vehicles located in Tenerife, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and finally the island of La Palma. The Company has its main garage and maintenance facilities located closest to the capital of the island Puerto del Rosario. The Grupo 1844 portfolio of business is listed as follows which confirms the overall road transport focus but clearly indicates the diversity of transport activities.

Grupo 1844 Subsidiary Business Operations by Canary Islands 2023

Island	Brand Name	Type of Business Operation
Grand Canary	Canary Bus	Tourist, schools, private hire, personnel transport
	Taller Los Rios	Bus and lorry vehicle maintenance
	Canary Shuttle	Coach hire, passenger transfer wholesaler
	Crevi recambios	Vehicle spare parts
Fuerteventura	Tiadhe	Public bus services
	Maxorata Bus	Tourist, schools, private hire, personnel transport
	Canary Shuttle	Coach hire, passenger transfer wholesaler
	Crevi recambios	Vehicle spare parts
	Auto Lujo	Taxi, personnel transport
	Forum 18	Café and ice cream retail
	Blegabus	Tourist private hire
	Las Vegas Finca	Hotel
Tenerife	Teide Tours	Tourist, schools, private hire, personnel transport
	Canary Shuttle	Coach hire, passenger transfer wholesaler
La Palma	Maxorata Bus	Tourist, schools, private hire, personnel transport
	Canary Shuttle	Tourist coach hire
Lanzarote	Maxorata Bus	Tourist, schools, private hire, personnel transport
	Canary Shuttle	Coach hire, passenger transfer wholesaler

The business is still very much a family business with two Diaz Mellan family members as directors controlling between them 95% of the Group's shareholding. The Group has a number of trading companies i.e. Bus Tours S.L.; Hermanos Diaz Mellan S.L.; Motor 1844 S.L.; and Tiadhe Transporte Regular S.L. However, in late 2023 ALSA (Spanish subsidiary of MOBICO ex National Express) has purchased Grupo 1844 for €80million, subject to suspensive clauses. Currently they would appear to be awaiting the green light from the Spanish Monopolies Commission. No doubt in the future organisation, brands and operations will change as ALSA get to know the business.

Transportes Antonio Diaz Hernandez Tiadhe regular bus services

The Company has its main garage and maintenance facilities located closest to the capital of the island Puerto del Rosario on the road going out of the capital towards Angel on the Carretera del Sur Km 3.7 (Zurita), C.P.3560. Located on the very outskirts of the city is a very large gated compound painted in the Canary Shuttle bright orange. This facility is used for both Tiadhe regular buses and the various coach operators, like Canary Shuttle and Maxorata Bus. Sadly there was no time to visit the bus/coach garage but from passing observation I could see significant covered maintenance sheds, hard standing bus and coach parking areas, vehicle machine wash facility, all very professional. The Tiadhe alone has an average of 80 driving staff for its fleet of 45 buses according to my research. This is supported by five administrative staff plus one mechanic, the latter I find a little hard to believe. The fleet is largely made up of a mix of various MAN's vehicles supported by a small fleet of Mercedes Benz and Scania's.

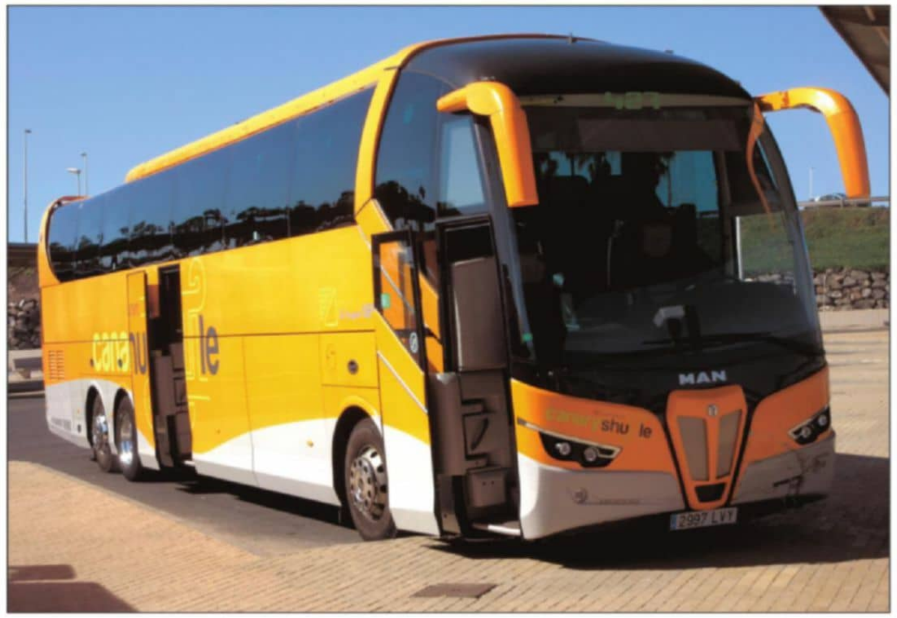
Tiadhe / Transportes Antonia Diaz Hermandez published fleet list 2022

Fleet No	Registration	Manufacturer and Seating
148	6766-HTM	Unimog 20
149	6770-HTM	Unimog 20
146	8118-KSD	MAN-IRIZAR 51
103	8033-KSD	MAN-IRIZAR 51
112	369-HFG	Mercedes Benz 44 02 37
105	8086-KSD	MAN-IRIZAR 43
142	5113-FYM	MAN-IRIZAR 53
143	5072-FYM	MAN-IRIZAR 53
124	3797-HFG	Mercedes Benz 634 01 75
145	5022-FYM	MAN-IRIZAR 53
101	3460-JTN	MAN Lion's Regio 53
140	3929-FNG	MAN 18.410 HOCL 55
119	2305-GMW	MAN R33 Ratio 55
120	8169-GPT	Mercedes Benz HTAE 06 55
121	8170-GPT	Mercedes Benz HTAE 06 55
122	6146-GPV	Mercedes Benz HTAE 06 55
123	1761-HBR	Mercedes Benz HTAE 06 55
113	2694-HZC	Scania Century 55
127	2645-HZC	Scania Century 55
128	2652-HZC	Scania Century 55
131	2720-HZC	Scania Century 55
138	2632-HZC	Scania Century 55
126	7319-HKM	Scania CVAB 67
130	4806-JKS	MAN Noge Touring 71
132	4937-JKS	MAN Noge Touring 71
134	4923-JKS	MAN Noge Touring 71
111	7163-JDF	MAN Noge Touring 71
129	7314-JSF	MAN Noge Touring 71
133	7249-JSF	MAN Noge Touring 71
102	7515-KGD	MAN Noge Touring 71
150	2534-KGD	MAN Noge Touring 71
151	2548-KGD	MAN Noge Touring 71
152	2558-KGD	MAN Noge Touring 71
125	3868-HFG	Mercedes Benz HTAE 06 72
114	7224-GJD	Mercedes Benz PMR 35
115	7227-GJD	Mercedes Benz PMR 35
116	0782-GJY	MAN 24,480 Ratio Touring 72
117	0797-GJY	MAN 24,480 Ratio Touring 72
118	7944-KSD	Renault Servicar 20
L1000	9941-LDG	MAN Noge Touring 56
L1001	1525-LDH	MAN Noge Touring 72
L1002	2575-LDH	MAN Noge Touring 56
L1003	6577-LDM	MAN Noge Touring 56
L1004	8636-LLK	IVECO Bus Crossway 43
L1005	8663-LLK	IVECO Bus Crossway 43
	TOTAL VEHICLES	45

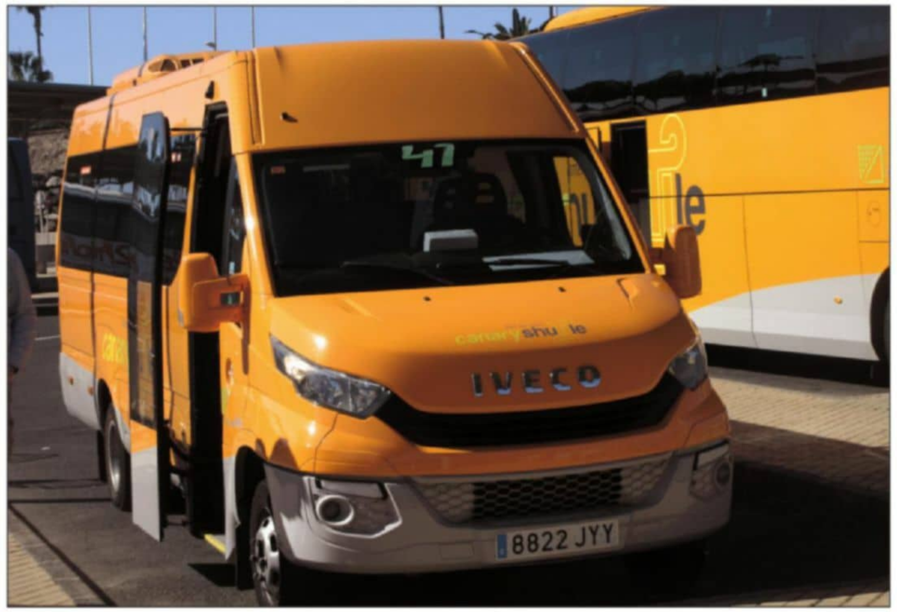
Taidhe / Additional Buses Observed 2023

1009	8013-MDH	VDL Futura HD13
1006	7656-MBZ	MAN
1007	5510-MKB	VDL Futura HD13
1011	2074-MDZ	MAN
1014	2060-MDZ	MAN
1018	7667-MLL	Scania Temsa HD13
1020	7669-MLL	Scania Temsa
1021	4755-MLR	Scania Temsa HD13
????	2515-KGD	MAN

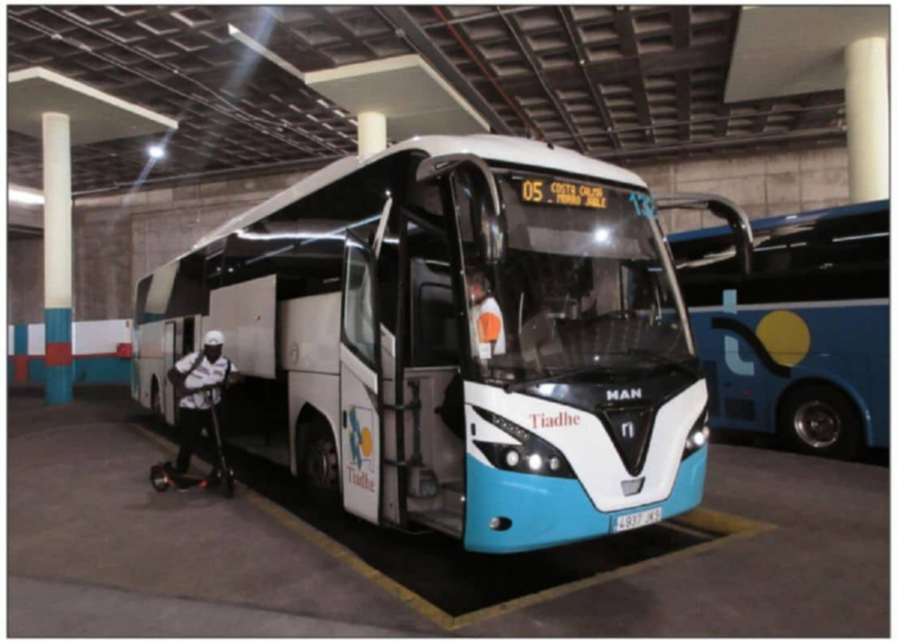
I travelled on 102, 146, L1000/3, 1009, 1020. I also saw 101, 125, 132, 148, 151, 152, L1004, 1006, 1007, 1011, 1014, 1018, 1021.



RIGHT: Fuerteventura Airport Canary Shuttle MAN reg: 2997 LVY which took us to our hotel in Costa Calma .



LEFT: Fuerteventura Airport Iveco mini coach in the unmistakable orange livery of Canary shuttle reg: 8822 JYY .



RIGHT: Morra Jable bus station on service 05 to Costa Calma MAN reg: 4937 JKS; fleet no: 132 in old style bus livery with passenger about to load scooter into the side lockers .

None of the buses I saw were accessibility friendly either for accommodating prams, disability scooters or able-bodied persons who were reliant on a walking stick. All vehicles were high rise touring coaches used on stage carriages services with to three or four access steps, none were low-kneeling buses like we see in the United Kingdom, although I did see a number of buses which had side access lifts, a minimum requirement in the United Kingdom under the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulation 2000.

The busiest month on the Tiadhe islands bus network is August with over 300,000 passenger per month, traffic slowly falling from that month to December at around 250,000 passenger per month. The first half of the calendar are the quietest passenger months, although with tourists escaping the cold winter in northern Europe I was a little surprised. The busiest route is service 01 with an income of €2million (2022) and is the island main north to south corridor bus route Puerto del Rosario – Antigua – Gran Tarajal – Costa Calma – Morro Jable 64m (103km). The second biggest income generating route, €1.2million, is service 6 Puerto del Rosario – Parque Holandes – Los Hoteles – Corralejo 22m (35km).

Transportes Antonio Diaz Hernandez Coach Business

Grupo 1844 operates a number of separate coach operation brands on the island, however the majority of the coaches I saw were Canary Shuttle which seemed to be everywhere. The Maxorata Bus brand, also in the bright orange livery was less conspicuous than its counterpart. Canary Shuttle operates a mix of full-size coaches and minibuses largely on resort hotel to airport shuttle work. The minibuses were drawn from Iveco, Renault occasionally in its all-over blue livery you see the brand Blegabus but I only saw a couple of these coaches at the airport. All vehicles carry fleet numbers located at the front of the coach / minicoach to the right.

OUT ON THE ROAD

We arrived at Fuerteventura airport for our ten-day holiday in Costa Calma which is an hour’s drive away, our transfer was by the bright orange coach of Canary Shuttle, the subsidiary of Grupo 1844, in a lovely new MAN reg: L 2980 LVY. This was my first trip to Fuerteventura so it was going to allow me the opportunity to use the services of Tiadhe. The buses do not carry the company registration address of the bus operator unlike here in the United Kingdom. Some buses still carry the ice white and turquoise skirting livery but this is obviously being phased out with a new overall deep blue livery. The bus drivers accept cash (€’s) or a pre-paid style “London Oyster card” system which is electronically scan-read. Bus drivers have very small uniforms, dark ink blue trouser accompanied by white short sleeve ‘v’ neck shirts with orange sleeves and dark blue rings on the end of the sleeves and around the ‘v’ neck. From our experience standing passengers are not allowed on any of the routes, this is carefully monitored by the bus drivers who have tight control through the buses having a passenger loading front entrance and a disembarkation door at the rear of the bus.

Costa Calma

Costa Calma main bus station used to be near the Hotel Monica but is now closed and it appears to be an outdoor events venue. It was an off-road terminal with separate vehicle entry and exit to a tarmac open terminal with a now closed bus ticket office. The present bus terminal is a rather peculiar on street lay-by located on the circumference of a road traffic island Ave de Jahn Reisen. At first this can be a bit confusing as buses traveling on route 1 between Morro Jable to Puerto Rosario use the same bus stop whether they are traveling north or south bound. The bus layby has two two-sided bus shelters and a set of bus timetables covering the five bus routes that serve the resort.

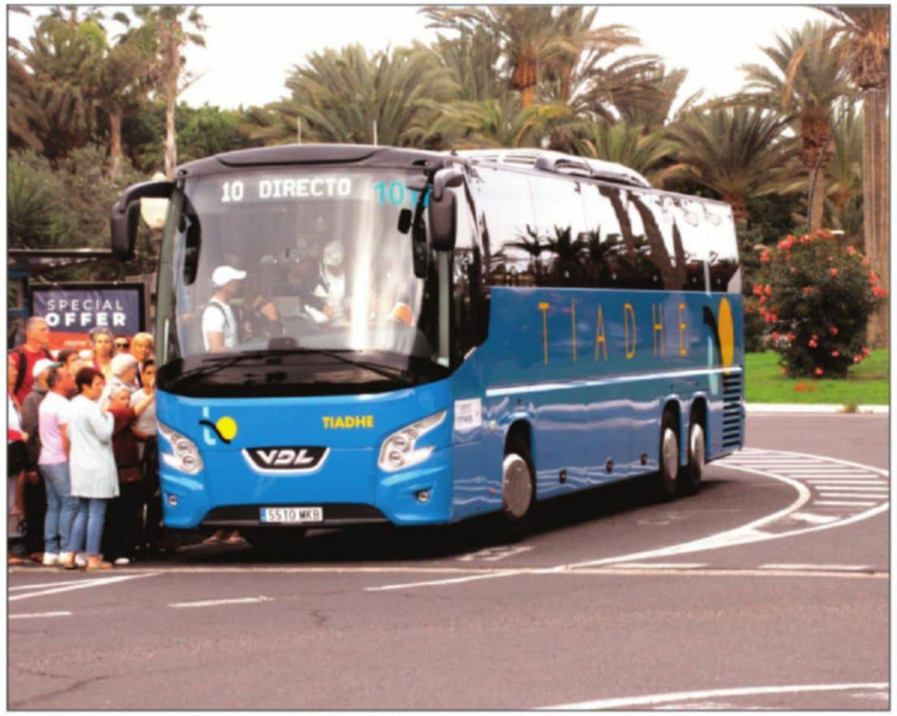
The largely non-residential tourist resort of Costa Calma reflects the important relation the stage carriage bus network has with the tourist industry. Its residential population does not warrant the frequency of bus services it has. At present Costa Calma is served by service 01 to Puerto del Rosario with 14 departures daily; 05 Costa Calma to Morro Jable 10 per day; less frequent route 10 Morro Jable – Costa Calma – La Lajita and Puerto del Rosario – Airport - Costa Calma – Morro Jable both with 3 departures per day and rural route 04 Pajara to Morro Jable via Costa Calma and service 09 Pajara – Costa Calma – Morro Jable both with one departure per day.

Costa Calma to Puerto del Rosario

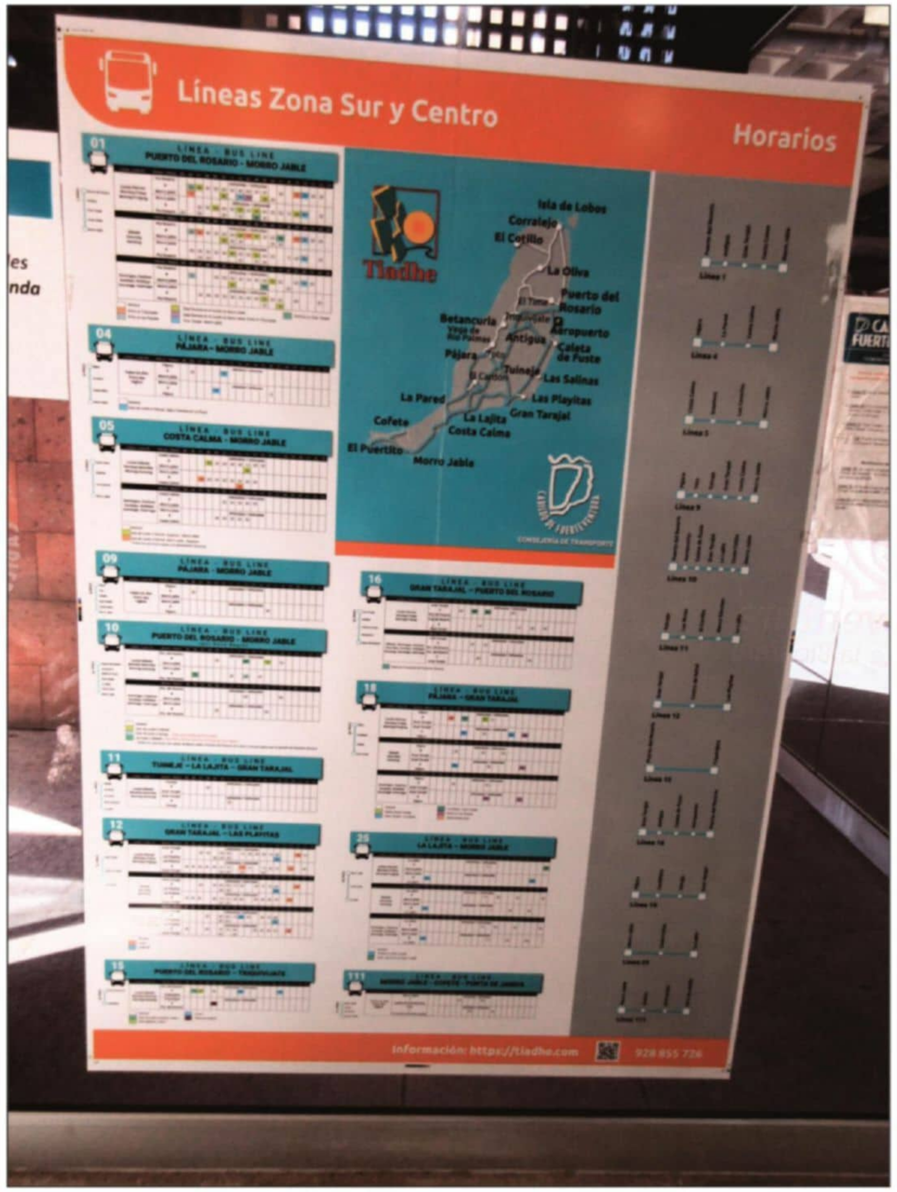
We decided to take a day trip to the islands capital Puerto del Rosario and took the route 10 Directo from Costa Calma. We departed on 10h00, an MAN Noge Touring reg: 6577-LDM; fleet no: 1003 which left with a full load of passengers almost all of the way until Fuerteventura Airport. The route, using FV-2 is largely rural following generally the coastline apart from a very well-engineered inland circumnavigation of La Atalaya de Agude 1620ft (494m) returning to the coast-line before reaching the Airport. From there it is largely through the outer suburbs of Puerto del Rosario.

The capital of the island Puerto del Rosario (pop29,160) gained its status in 1860. It remains the transport hub for the island. The capital is connected to the second largest town is La Oliva (pop 25,884) by route 3 but surprisingly only with three departures times per day, with the town of Pajara (pop 20,539). However, bus route 09 to Morro Jable and service 15 to Triquivijate all operate one service per day from the capital. The main corridor bus routes from Puerto del Rosario are to Correlejo (pop 16,300) by route 06 which operates 18 times per day and supplemented by route 07 three departures. The other core route is number 03 from the capital to the island’s international airport with 29 timetabled services. Finally route 16 which is a sort of city suburban route with 10 departures per day. The second largest residential town on the island Tuineje (pop 14,700) served by bus route 09; route 11; and route 16, third being Antigua (pop 11,948) bus route 01.

The Bus Station in Puerto del Rosario is locally known as the Estacion Guaguas de Puerto and is located C. Primero de Mayo, s/n, 35600 Puerto del Rosario. The passenger terminal building is a large brick walled gentle domed roof building. The hall is airy, light but rather cavernous, a bit like the underground arrivals and departure area. This consisted of a single long spine passenger platform with either side echelon head-on vehicle bays. The terminal building has a manned information desk, public toilets and passenger seating area. It is a good ten-minute walk from the capital main shopping area.



RIGHT: Very smart looking Tiadhe on route 10, the rapid service to Puerto del Rosario via Costa Calma VDL reg: 5510 MKB; fleet no: 101 at the Costa Calma main bus terminal at the rather peculiar on street lay-by located on the circumference of a road traffic island at the Ave de Jahn Reisen .



RIGHT: Morra Jable bus station one of the timetable boards showing the ‘centro area’ with individual specific route timetables and a bus map, sadly not indicating specific route numbers

The capital is sadly not one of the most attractive places so after a couple of hours we returned on MAN reg: 2515 KGD on route 01 which traverses along FV-20 through the volcanic sandy hinterland of central Fuerteventura, a chance to see some lovely white-washed village buildings like Antigua, Agua de Bueyes and Tuineje. The bus route re-joins highway FV-2 to continue to Costa Calma This longer journey time 01 route between Puerto del Rosario and Costa Calma has a hourly frequency it costs €7.55c (£6.45) per person single for the one and a half-hour journey time.

Costa Calma to Morro Jable

Our trip was to travel on route 05 along the coast from Costa Calma to the southern regional urban centre of Morro Jable with its 2.5m (4km) of beautiful beach and low-rise buildings along its straight flat sea front promenade. The bus left the Costa Calma main on- street terminal at Ave de Jahn Reisen with half the seats occupied. One interesting observation was that passenger requested the bus driver to open one of the vehicles side lockers so she could put her cycle in, the driver looked unflustered at the request and duly obliged. Driving slowly through the town's streets the route then uses the motorway FV2, leaving it to service local small seaside urban developments on route. These side roads, although well engineered can be a bit hairy, generally following the contours of the coastal cliffs. After a 45 minute journey the bus routes takes you along the elegant sea front of Morro Jable climbing a hill to the top end of the town, finally entering what appears to be a relatively new covered bus station. The bus station, Estacion Guaguas, is an archetypal multi-story car park design, the structure held up by a number of round concrete pillars. The bus loading bays are of a head-on design, six bays in all plus three short bays, all slotted in between the pillars. The passenger area is actually quite light and airy, with passenger seating and very good bus route timetable displays and route maps. The main bus routes out of the terminal are route 01 to Costa Calma and the capital Puerto del Rosario; 05 the stopping service to Costa Calma; route 10 the 'rapid' service to Puerto del Rosario via the Airport. There is an interesting bus service from the terminal, twice per day at 10h00 and 14h00 using a Mercedes Benz 4WD vehicle that takes a circular route into the Parque Natural de Jandia and area of sand dunes, flora and fauna and its famous remote lighthouse.

Our Monday outward journey on route 05, the stopping service leaving Costa Calma at 10h30 MAN Noge Touring reg; 9941-LDG; fleet no: 1000 returning was again on route 05 at 14h30 on a Scania Temsa reg: 7669-MLL; fleet no: 1020 in the new livery from the bus station, single fare €2.70c (£2.30).

Sunday we again went to Morro Jable on route 01 the 09h30 from Puerto Rosario arriving at Costa Calma at 11h00 onward to Morro Jable, again a stopping service. The published timetable does not allow you to know whether the bus arrives and departs on time, which to me is a little stressful. Our bus was an MAN Irizar reg: 8118-KSD; fleet no: 146 which had a faulty front passenger door which caused the driver some minor aggravation. This service was full of passengers on departure and passed numerous passengers waiting at bus stops. Our return was on service 10 the rapid service to Puerto Rosario at 14h00 which was a thirty-minute journey, the bus was full with passengers, passing waiting passenger at some bus stops VDL reg: 8013-MDH; fleet no: 1008.

Our return hotel transfer from Costa Calma to Fuerteventura Airport was Canary Shuttle. At the duly appointed time an orange Mercedes Benz Sprinter minibus arrived, 16 passenger seats with the last two rows of seats being re-moved for luggage. The dispatcher manifest to the coach driver had three pick-ups with a total of six transfer passenger. We duly went to the two other specified hotels to find there were no passengers waiting for the transfer bus. Our bus driver then telephoned the dispatcher to check out the situation, after a few minutes wait at the last hotel the dispatcher authorised the bus driver to depart for the airport directly. Who says that airport hotel transfer work is not stressful !!!

Some Final Thoughts

The last time I visited Spain was in 2018 and it was mandatory for public stage carriage buses to display a "SP" (Servicio Publico) plate on the rear of the vehicle I'm not sure that requirement has been rescinded or Fuerteventura is exempt but none of the buses I saw had the "SP" displayed.

Secondly Fuerteventura unlike Tenerife and Gran Canaria doesn't have a hop-on-hop-off open top double decker bus service. If any reader of BWW wants to take advantage of this commercial opportunity please could they at least offer me a one-off commission payment for drawing it to their attention.

Lastly some routes on Fuerteventura are longer than the EU the 50km ruling for stage carriage bus services under the European Union Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 and subsequent Regulation (EC) 1073/2009 c. I was not aware of a bus driver change or timetable break on my journey from Costa Palma to Puerto del Rosario 64m (103km). The Spanish version of EC 5612006, chapter 4 article 11 to 13 says that a state can authorise longer or shorter distances and/or periods, as it wishes, provided that the route is not international and provided that safety is not endangered. Another classic case of countries adapting their laws while the United Kingdom shoots itself in the foot.

Finally January in Fuerteventura with a temperature of 25c could not be a better place to be in when the United Kingdom is bathing in temperatures of between (-)3c and 8c.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by Clive D'eath, the BWW Spanish Correspondent in the production of this article.

Jan 2024 £1.00 = €1.17

A Tale Of Two Southern Cities

by Basil Hancock

READING CINEMAS
READING CINEMAS
24 HOURS
Waikiwi Link
Heidelberg Star
Kew Connection
BusSmart
BusSmart
BusSmart

ABOVE: Go Bus Enterprise Plasmas 771, 776 and 774 set off simultaneously from the Invercargill city terminal in Dee Street on the Kew Connection, Heidelberg Star and Waikiwi Link services on 17 September 2019. (All photos by the author)

Basil Hancock describes the urban bus services in two of the most southerly cities in the world, Invercargill in New Zealand and Punta Arenas in Chile. This article was originally written in 2019 and describes the situation as it was then. Recent changes in both cities are detailed at the end of the article.

Southerly Cities

Invercargill is the most southerly city in New Zealand and the most southerly city anywhere outside of South America. It is located at Latitude 46o 24', which is roughly equivalent to Lake Como in Italy or Prince Edward Island in Canada in the northern hemisphere. It has an urban population of 58,000. The main industries revolve around dairy farming, but nearby is also a large aluminium smelter, the only one in New Zealand. Tourism is also a major and growing industry as Invercargill is within reach of New Zealand's Fiordland, including the famous and spectacular Milford Sound. As is typical of many Australasian towns and cities, the city spreads out over quite an area and the population density is low, which is combined with a high level of car ownership. Not promising bus operating territory.

Punta Arenas is the capital city of Chile's most southern region, Magallanes and Antarctica Chilena, and is just across the Straits of Magellan from Tierra Del Fuego. It is located at Latitude 53o 10', which is roughly equivalent to the city of Stoke-on-Trent in the northern hemisphere and has an urban population of 125,000. The main industries include oil, coal, agriculture and tourism, the latter as a gateway to the fabulous sights of Patagonia. Only the cities of Puerto Williams (Chile) and Ushuaia (Argentina) are further south, and they are both considerably smaller than Punta Arenas. In comparison with Invercargill ,the city appears relatively compact, with a higher population density, and it is likely that the level of car ownership is much lower than in Invercargill.

Although a long way apart (7,600 kilometres) and on different continents, both cities have a number of features in common, including being at sea level and essentially flat, being coastal with a major port (although Invercargill is actually a few kilometres in from the sea and its port, Bluff, is some 25 kilometres to the south), and being subject to chilly winds blowing up from the Antarctic. They also both have city bus services which have quite a bit in common.

Buses in Invercargill

Invercargill had a four-route standard gauge tram system which commenced operation in 1912 (in part replacing a horse tram system dating back to 1881) and closed in 1952, with a fleet of 22 trams. The system was the most southerly electric tramway in the world and the terminus at South Invercargill was the furthest south electric tram terminus of them all. The body of Birney tram 15 survived and the fully restored tram now operates on the tourist tramway in the city of Christchurch.

Invercargill City Council commenced bus services in 1928 and expanded the bus fleet when the trams closed down. The fleet was notable in the 1950s for its 16 full-fronted Daimler CVD6 single-deckers, but in later years was mainly composed of Bedford buses, with a few Fords and Leylands.

In 1991 the council's bus operations were privatised as Invercargill Passenger Transport (IPT), which then operated the services under contract to the City Council. At one time it traded under the name of Passenger Transport Citibus.

IPT later expanded to include operations in Dunedin, Christchurch and Auckland, but in April 2014 it sold out to Go Bus Transport, which operates bus and coach services in many towns and cities in New Zealand. GoBus operates various services from its depot in Invercargill, including the city bus services, schools, charter, tours and Intercity coach services, plus workers transport to and from the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter.

In 2019 there were four city bus routes in Invercargill, operated under name of BusSmart. They were launched in December 2012 and replaced ten previous city routes. They were funded jointly by Invercargill City Council and the New Zealand Ratepayers Association.

The four routes were the:

HS Heidelberg Star, which operated an anti-clockwise loop around the south east of the city.

KC Kew Connection, which operated an anti-clockwise loop around the south of the city.

WC Windsor Comet, which operated an anti-clockwise loop around the north east of the city.
WK Waikiwi Link, which operated to the north of the city with a large clockwise loop at its outer end.
The city centre is at the western end of the urban area, facing on to the New River Estuary, so there is no western loop.

All four routes operated from Monday to Saturday, with no services on Sunday, and all buses have free Wi-Fi and an on-board information system. They all departed from and terminate at BusSmart Central, in Dee Street, which is effectively a collection of bus stops on one of the main streets, and each service operated every 45 minutes from 0645 to 1800 Monday-Friday and 1030-1500 on Saturdays, requiring one bus each. Perhaps uniquely buses on all four routes lined up behind each other at the terminus and all set off together in what resembled a Le Mans Grand Prix start.

A standard flat fare of $3 was charged, with no concessions for children or senior citizens, but it only cost $2 if the BusSmart card was used.

The four routes were operated by a batch of 28-seat Enterprise Plasma single deck midibuses with Designline bodies, which UK readers will instantly recognise as Plaxton Primos. They operated in a white livery and in 2019 they were rare survivors of the model. Designline are believed to have built at least fourteen Plasmas in 2009, of which six went to Australia and the other eight to GoBus in New Zealand. Six of the GoBus examples (771, 774-778) were allocated to Invercargill, with four required for service, and the other three (772, 773, 779) based in Gisborne in the North Island. The ninth example, 779, was built by Plaxton in the UK in 2010 and was originally YX60DWW in York Pullman fleet and later in the Transdev York fleet.

Buses in Punta Arenas

It is not clear what, if any, bus services operated in Punta Arenas prior to 2009, but in all likelihood it would have been minibuses or small truck-based vehicles operated by a multitude of operators, largely unregulated and unplanned, as in many South American cities. In 2009, in an attempt to establish a planned bus network, a tender was issued for the provision of services. The winner was a joint organisation comprising Gasco Magallanes and Circulo Ejecutivo, which were associated with the Yanguas and Turistik bus companies respectively. They proposed an innovative and ambitious urban transport operation called Movigas consisting of a fleet of 61 King Long midibuses, powered by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), and operating a network of four routes. Initially a subsidy of 38 million pesos was provided by the Chilean government.

Despite a good start, reportedly carrying four million passengers between June and December 2010 alone, Movigas had reportedly lost around 4,500 million pesos by 2015. In the same year the government extended the contract until 2016 while they prepared a tender for the five year period 2016-2020.

In 2016 Inversiones Australes was awarded a new contract for Punta Arenas bus services and they began operations in January 2017 using the name Via Austral. The Movigas CNG fleet was taken over and an additional 23 similar buses were acquired. Peak frequencies were enhanced and services introduced on Sundays and public holidays. Additional services have since been introduced.

The current fleet comprises the original 61 King Long XMQ6891G buses acquired from Movigas and an additional 23 XMQ6900G buses. All have a total capacity of around 50 passengers and are powered by Cummins-Westport CNG engines. Most of the buses have a blue livery with yellow relief and two variants of white relief, although a few are in a more predominantly white livery.

Currently there are eight basic routes operated, numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and VH. The city lies on a north east to south west axis, following the coastline and not extending too far inland, and the bus routes largely follow this axis. All services operate seven days a week, and typically run from early morning to late at night on Monday-Friday and around 0900-2100 at weekends. Services 1, 2, 6 and 8 operate for 24 hours on Monday-Friday. Typical frequencies are around 12 minutes during the day, with longer headways in the evenings and at night.

Summary

In summary it can be seen that, although they are in two very different countries a long way apart, there are many similarities between the bus operations in Invercargill and Punta Arenas. Both serve port cities with relatively small populations at the southern extremes of their countries, both use midibus fleets and both are heavily subsidised.

The network in Invercargill is clearly aimed at shopping and work trips, with no early morning or evening services, and no services at all at weekends apart from Saturday mid-day. Services operate every 45 minutes.

In comparison the network in Punta Arenas has all eight routes operating seven days a week throughout the day and with all night services during the week on four routes. Frequencies are high, typically around 12 minutes during the day.

The biggest difference is in the fleet sizes, with Invercargill operating four buses from an available fleet of six, whereas Punta Arenas has a fleet of 84 buses available.

The differences probably reflect the relative economies and level of car ownership in both cities.

However, both cities operate networks which, considering the size of the cities, are probably quite good by world standards.

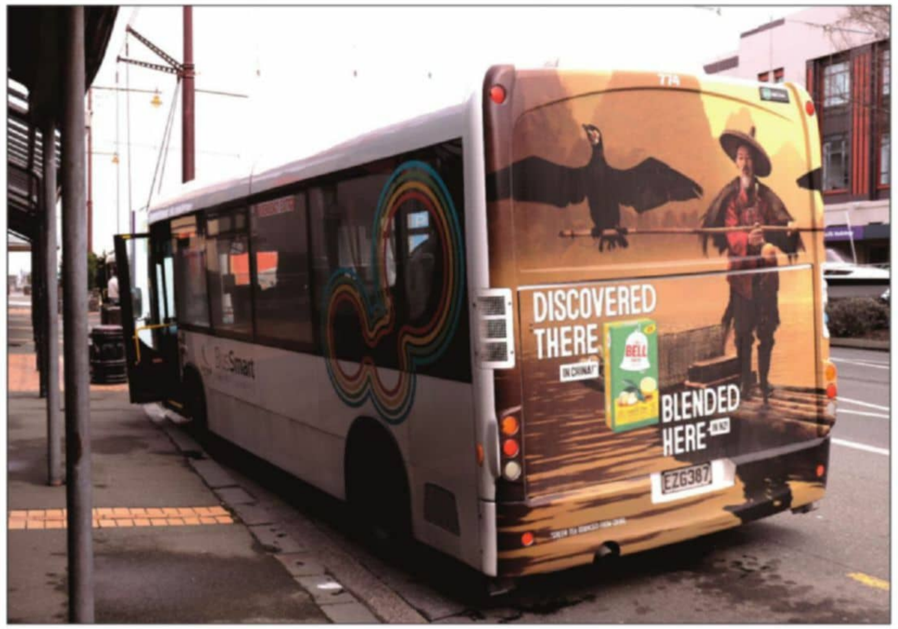
Postscript

The situation in Invercargill has changed since this article was written. GoBus sold out in August 2020 to the rapidly expanding Kinetic Group, but operations at this stage still operate under the GoBus name. In May 2021 the four circular routes were replaced by six new routes numbered 1 to 6, which cover basically the same areas but, by being simpler mainly out-and-back routes, provide reduced journey times to and from the city centre in comparison with the previous four lengthy loop services. The services are still marketed as BusSmart and start and finish at the same BusSmart hub as previously.

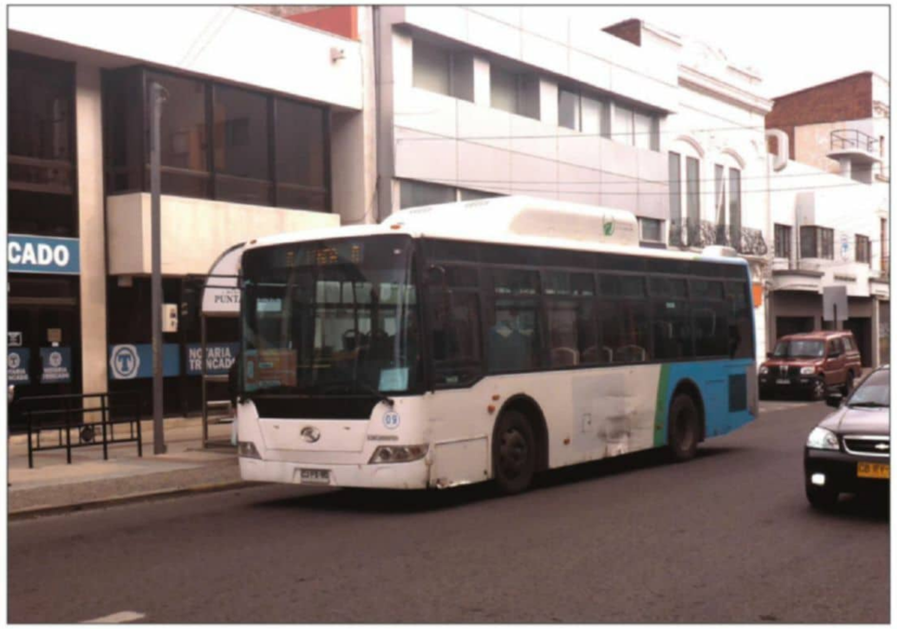
Services now operate Monday to Friday from 0720 to 1720 on an hourly basis, with additional buses in the morning and afternoon peaks to provide a 30 minute frequency, and on Saturdays hourly from 1050 to 1620. At peak times all six routes depart simultaneously, requiring six buses, so the Le Mans start may still occur, but now on a larger scale. Outside the peaks each bus operates two routes in an hourly cycle, so three buses are required. The six Primos still operate, still with BusSmart fleetnames, but they are now supported by two MANs with Designline bodies also with BusSmart fleetnames.

The same standard flat fare of $3 is still charged, with no concessions for children or senior citizens, but it only costs $2 (now free for senior citizens off-peak) if the Bee Card (formerly BusSmart card) is used.

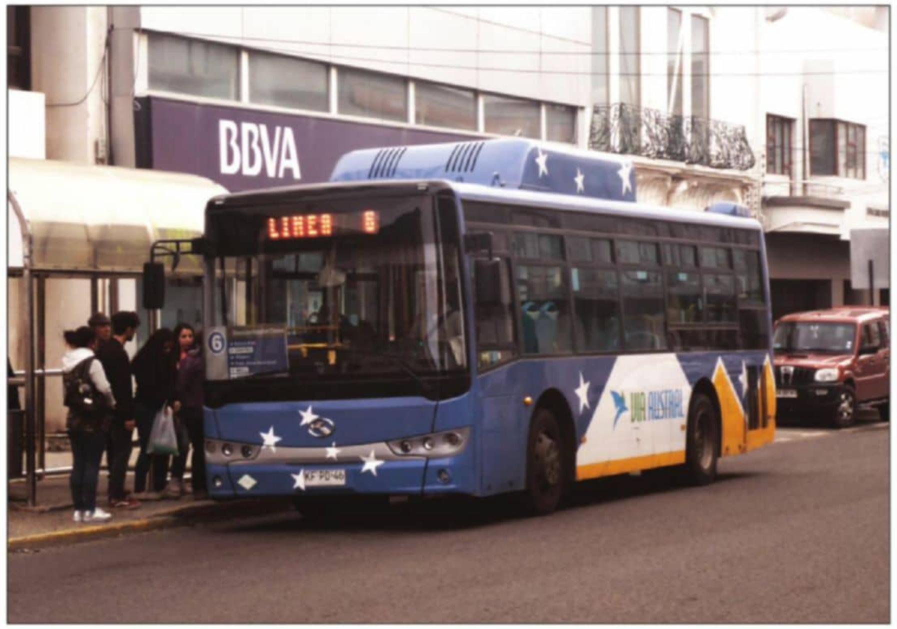
In Punta Arenas it seems that a new contractor, Ascendal, has taken over operations in September 2020 with a fleet of 70 front-engined two-door Marcopolo buses. It would also seem that some electric buses were delivered in 2023. This may mean that the existing CNG fleet has been withdrawn, although details are not clear. Currently there are eight basic routes operated, numbered 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 8V, 9 and VH. Since 2018 route 4 has been withdrawn and route 8V has been introduced.



RIGHT: Go Bus Enterprise Plasma 774 at the Dee Street terminal on 17 September 2019. Note how the front door opens onto the pavement, and the very short rear overhang for a rear-engined bus.



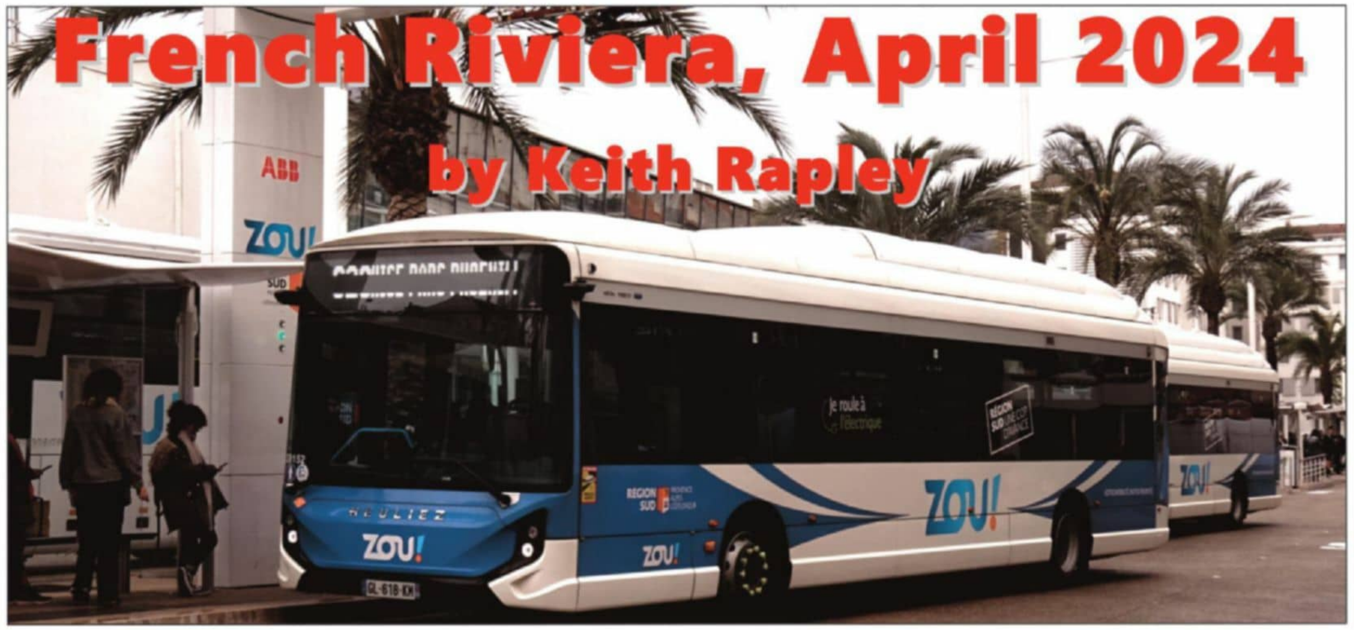
LEFT: Via Austral King Long XMQ6891G CNG bus CJ PX 90 in Avenue 21 de Mayo on Punta Arenas on 17 November 2018 in a mainly white livery.



RIGHT: Via Austral King Long XMQ6900G CNG bus KF PD 46 on Line 6 in Avenue 21 de Mayo in Punta Arenas on 17 November 2018..

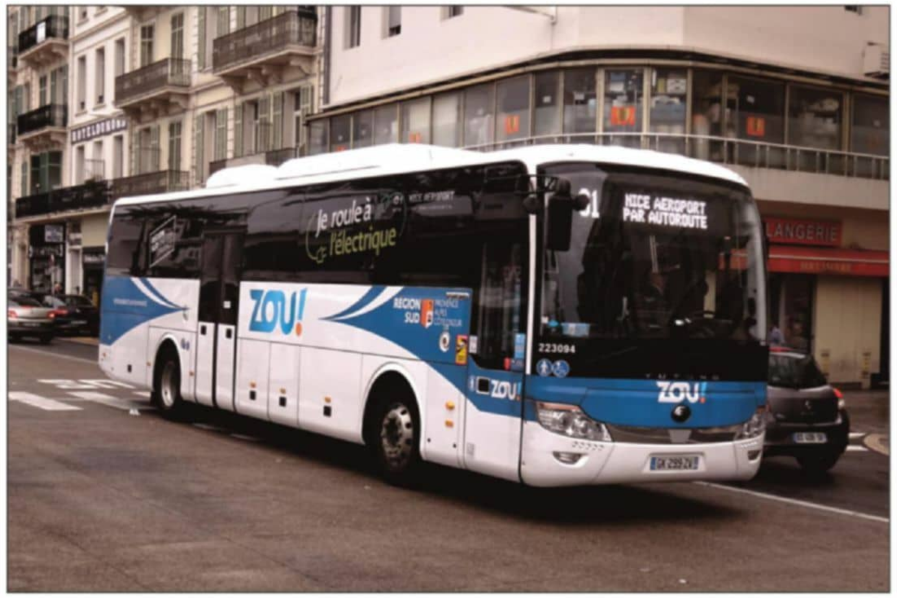
French Riviera, April 2024

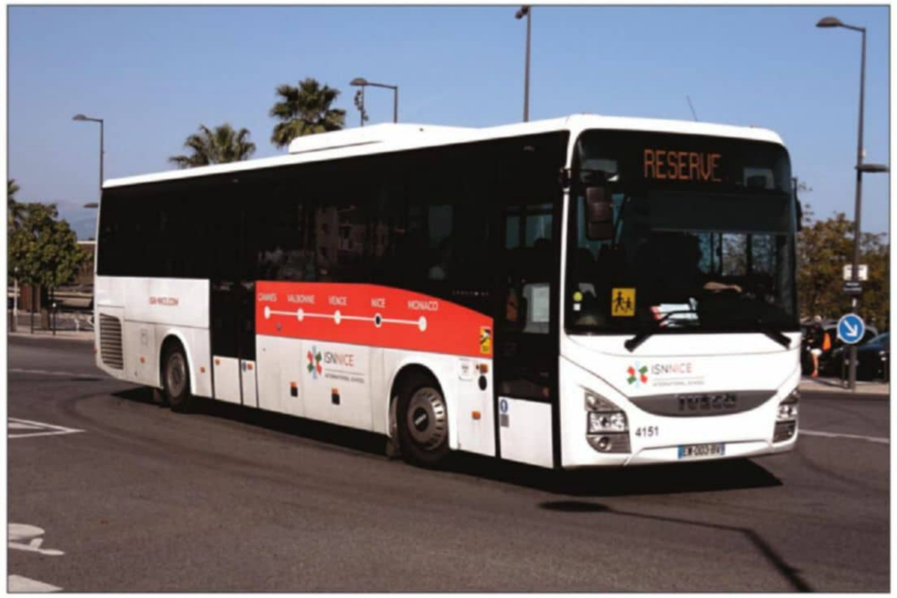
by Keith Rapley


ZOU!
HEULIEZ
REGION SUD
je roule à l'électrique
GL-618-KM

ABOVE: The regional transport network in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region is now branded 'Zou!' having previously been 'Lignes d'Azur'. Keolis Alpes-Maritimes is a major subcontractor, with a considerable fleet of electric buses delivered at the end of 2022. Heuliez GX337 E 229152 (GL-618-KM), with latest body style, is seen here under the charger at Cannes Gare SNCF before returning to Nice on the 'slow' route 600. (All photos by the author)

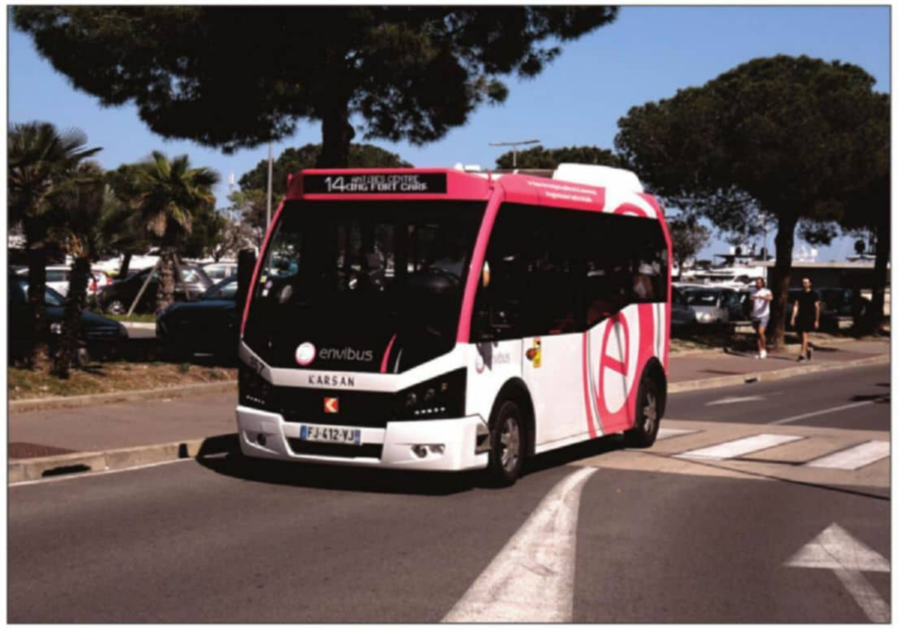
RIGHT: The 'fast' route connecting Cannes with Nice airport is the 81 (previously 210), which uses the A8 autoroute. Keolis Alpes-Maritimes have allocated a batch of Yutong ICe12 electrics, such as 223094 (GK-299-ZV), here running down Bd Carnot approaching the end of its journey to Cannes.

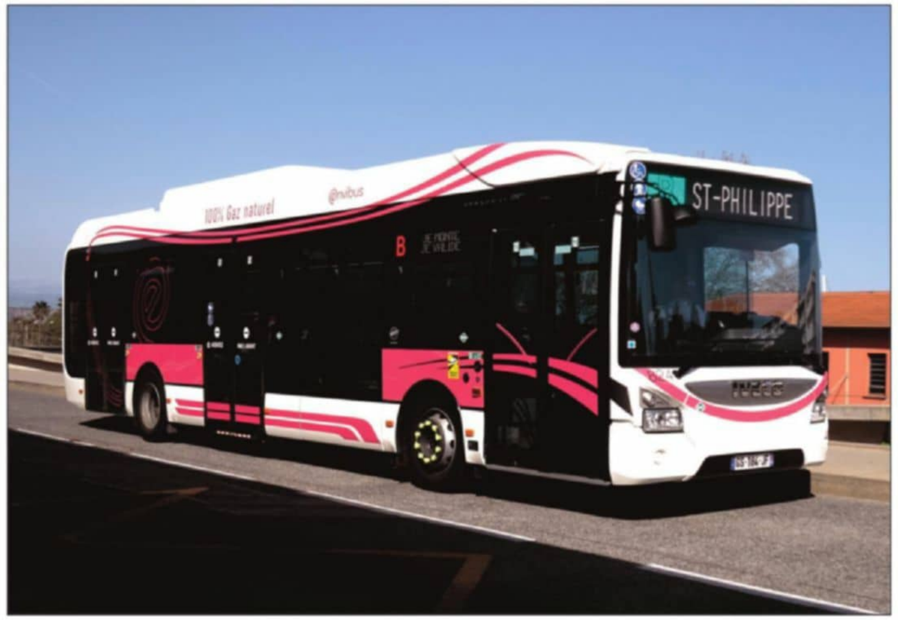

NICE AEROPORT PAR AUTOROUTE
je roule à l'électrique
ZOU!
REGION SUD
223094
GK-299-ZV


RESERVE
CANNES
VALBONNE
VENCE
NICE
MONACO
ISNNICE
4151

LEFT: The private International School of Nice provides a number of school runs along the coast, one reaching as far west as Cannes, the destination of EW-003-BV, an Iveco Bus Crossway, as it passes through Antibes. It carries fleetnumber 4151 and is probably operated by a subcontactor.

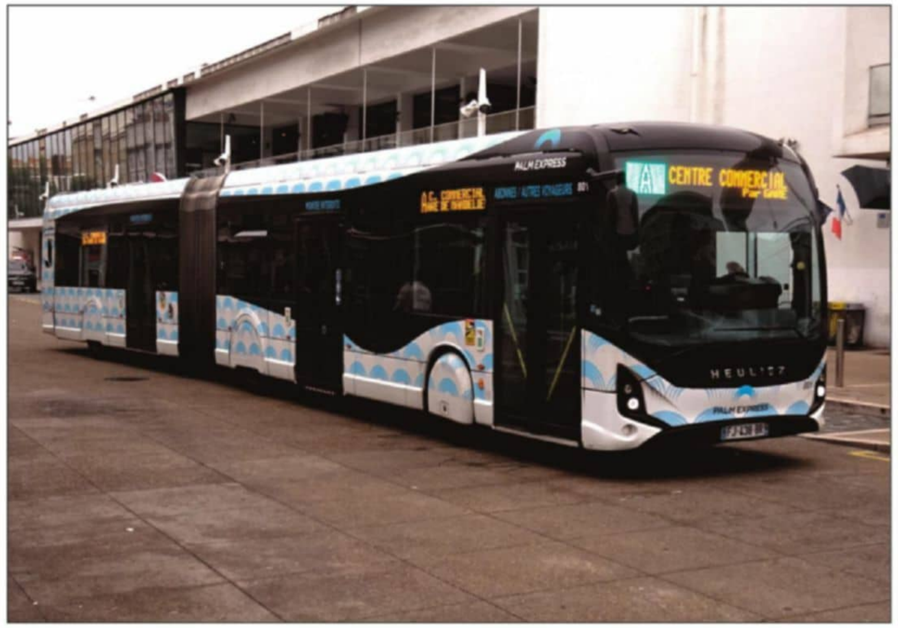
RIGHT: Envibus 157 (FJ-412-VJ) is a Karsan Jest, here passing Antibes' marina on Ligne 14, one of the free daytime shuttle services aimed at visitors.

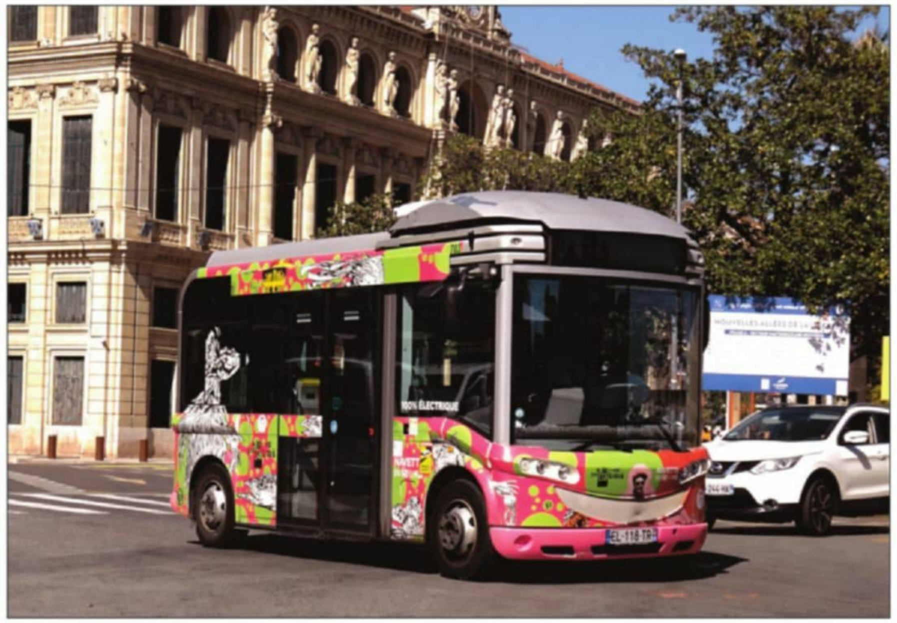

14
envibus
KARSAN
FJ-412-VJ


ST-PHILIPPE
100% Gaz naturel
envibus
B
IVECO

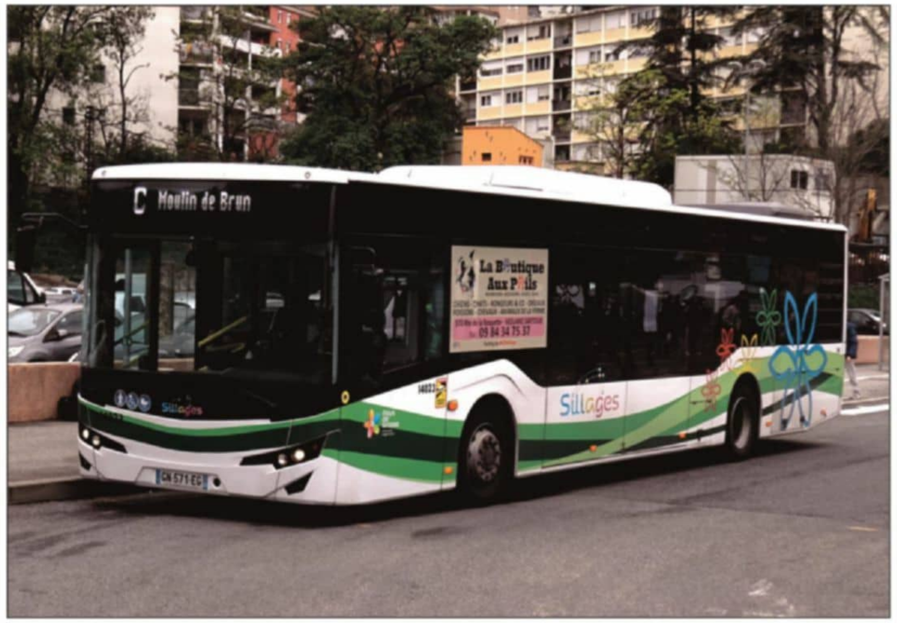
LEFT: Latest deliveries to the Envibus fleet in Antibes are a small batch of GNV-fuelled Iveco Urbanway 12, the last of which is 824 (GS-184-JF), here at the bus interchange adjacent to the Gare SNCF.

RIGHT: 801 (FJ-438-BR) is one of three Heuliez GX437 artics new to Palmbus in 2019, the first and so far only artics in the fleet. They are usually allocated to Route A, a long route connecting Cannes' Gare SNCF with Centre Commercial Minelle to the west.

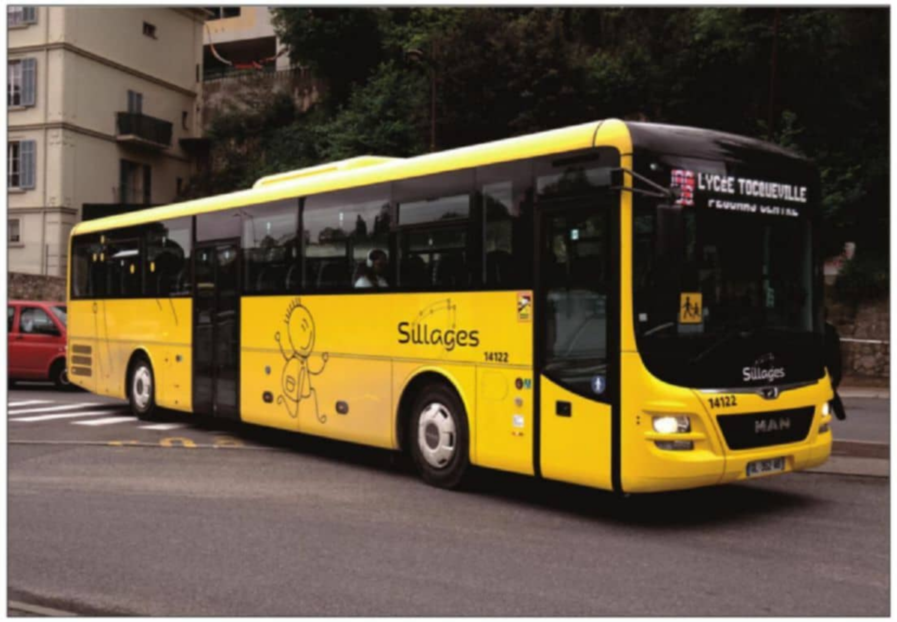

A
CENTRE COMMERCIAL
PALM EXPRESS
HEULIEZ
801
FJ-438-BR



LEFT: On one of the Palmbus 'navette' routes around central Cannes, 702, a Bolloré Bluebus 6, leaves the small interchange at Hôtel de Ville on another circuit..



RIGHT: Sillages is the name of the network around Grasse, the world's 'capital of perfume'. A recent delivery to subcontractor Moventis Pays de Grasse is 14023 (GN-571-EG), an Anadolu Isuzu Citiport. Despite the green-flavoured livery with flower symbols, this is a Cummins-engined diesel.



LEFT: The school services around Grasse are also covered by the Sillages network. 14122 (GL-352-AB) is a MAN Lion's Intercity C with an unknown sub-contractor, possibly Autocars Musso.

British Innovation on Indian Roads: the Duple Story

by Peter Myers & Praveen Kumar

British coachbuilder Duple made its mark in India between 1931 and the late 1960s. The London firm won a prestigious order from the Maharaja of Patiala for two bespoke luxury coaches for hunting expeditions and mounted on AEC Regal chassis. One vehicle was a 27-seat travelling coach while the other was fitted out as a mobile dining saloon which could accommodate 16 people at one sitting.

An illustrated article in The Commercial Motor, dated February 17, 1931, waxed lyrical about these opulent coaches whose livery was two shades of maroon. No expense was spared in fitting out the vehicles. The travelling coach had cabinets for cigarettes, cigars and drinks while the dining coach had a partition which separated the kitchenette from the dining section which had five folding tables. Behind it was a curtained-off toilet recess. The water supply was from an 18-gallon tank carried in the roof.

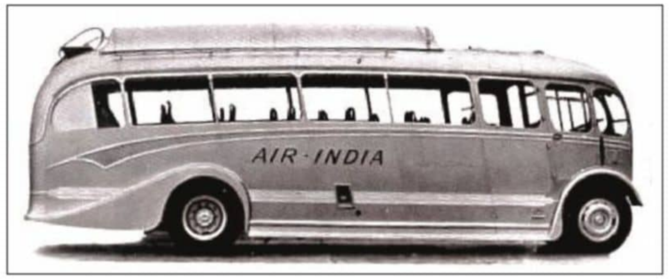
In the post-independence period, Duple won an order from Air-India to build coach bodies for two Leyland Tiger PS2/3 chassis and which were delivered in 1948 where Chassis numbers 481105 & 481106 Duple body numbers 48518 & 48519 . Only affluent people could afford international air travel at that time and the airline's coaches had to appeal to its discerning customers. Air-India's maiden international flight took place on June 8-10, 1948, when a Lockheed L-749A Constellation flew from Bombay to London Heathrow while staging through Cairo and Geneva.

The Duple bodies had tubular-framed seats which had the added features of blue hide trim and Dunlopillo cushions. The total seating capacity was 28. The bodies' framework used tropical timbers, and the large luggage compartment had double rear doors and a roof rack accessible by a ladder. Air-India provided free coach transport to the airport, avoiding competition with local bus services while ensuring adequate luggage capacity for passengers.

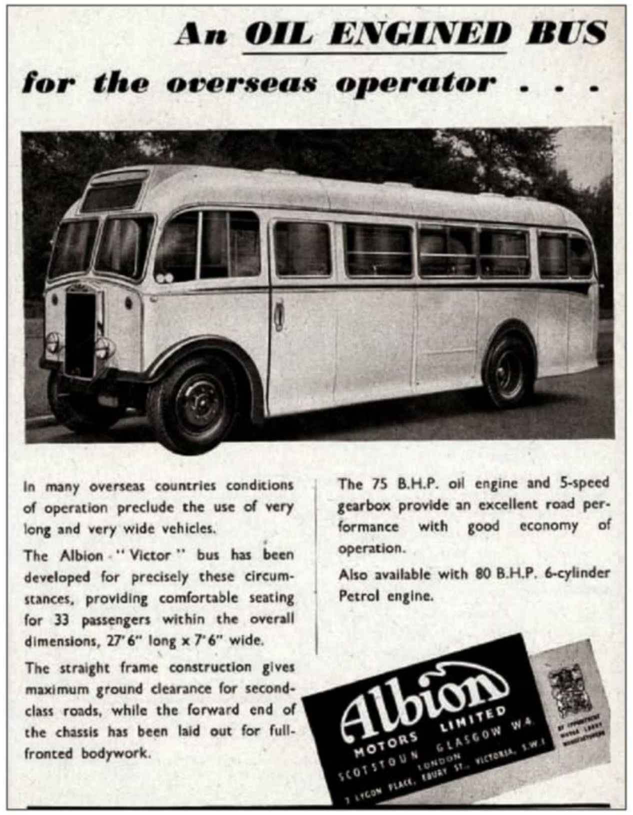
Air-India took delivery in 1952 of a further Duple-bodied 28-seat coach which had a Leyland Comet ECO2/4R truck chassis. The Duple body's lightweight construction contributed to significant running economies and advantages, making it an ideal choice for Air-India.

One of the Earls Court Show exhibits in 1948 was a forward-control Albion Victor FT3AB, chassis number "70729J", with a 33-seat Duple body, numbered Du 47276, and a full-width cab. It was later acquired by the Delhi Transport Service, being the only one purchased by the operator.

Duple-bodied coaches were also used for long-distance travel in India from the mid-1950s. They could be found in Goa, from 1954 to 1962, when Goa was still Portuguese, where single-deck coaches predominated and were built on Bedford models such as the SB, SB1, and SB3, with seating capacity ranging from 33 to 41, as well as on Ford Thames chassis. In 1962, a notable addition was a 36-seat service bus built on a Thames Trader chassis with a Duple body. This bus, 30 feet long, featured two doorways with manually



ABOVE: A Leyland Tiger PS2 with Duple bodywork for Air India. (Web source)



An OIL ENGINED BUS
for the overseas operator . . .

In many overseas countries conditions of operation preclude the use of very long and very wide vehicles.

The Albion "Victor" bus has been developed for precisely these circumstances, providing comfortable seating for 33 passengers within the overall dimensions, 27' 6" long x 7' 6" wide.

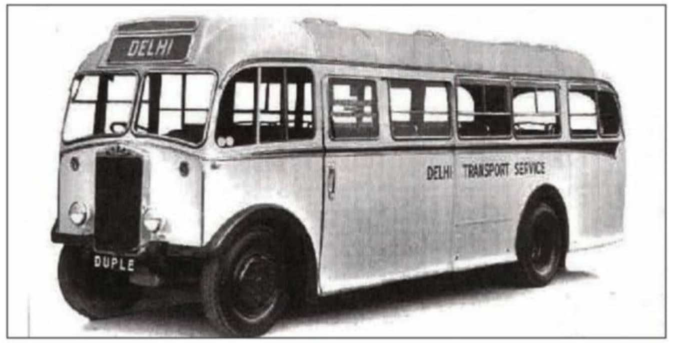
The straight frame construction gives maximum ground clearance for second-class roads, while the forward end of the chassis has been laid out for full-fronted bodywork.

The 75 B.H.P. oil engine and 5-speed gearbox provide an excellent road performance with good economy of operation.

Also available with 80 B.H.P. 6-cylinder Petrol engine.

Albion
MOTORS LIMITED
SCOTSTOUN GLASGOW W.4
LONDON
3 LYGON PLACE, EBURY ST., VICTORIA, S.W.1

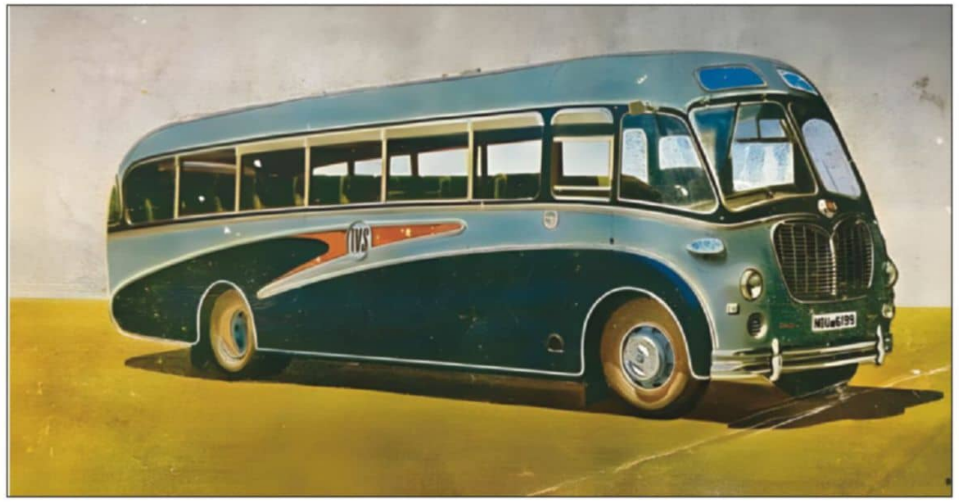
ABOVE: An advertisement for the Albion Victor aimed at overseas markets such as India. (Bus & Coach)

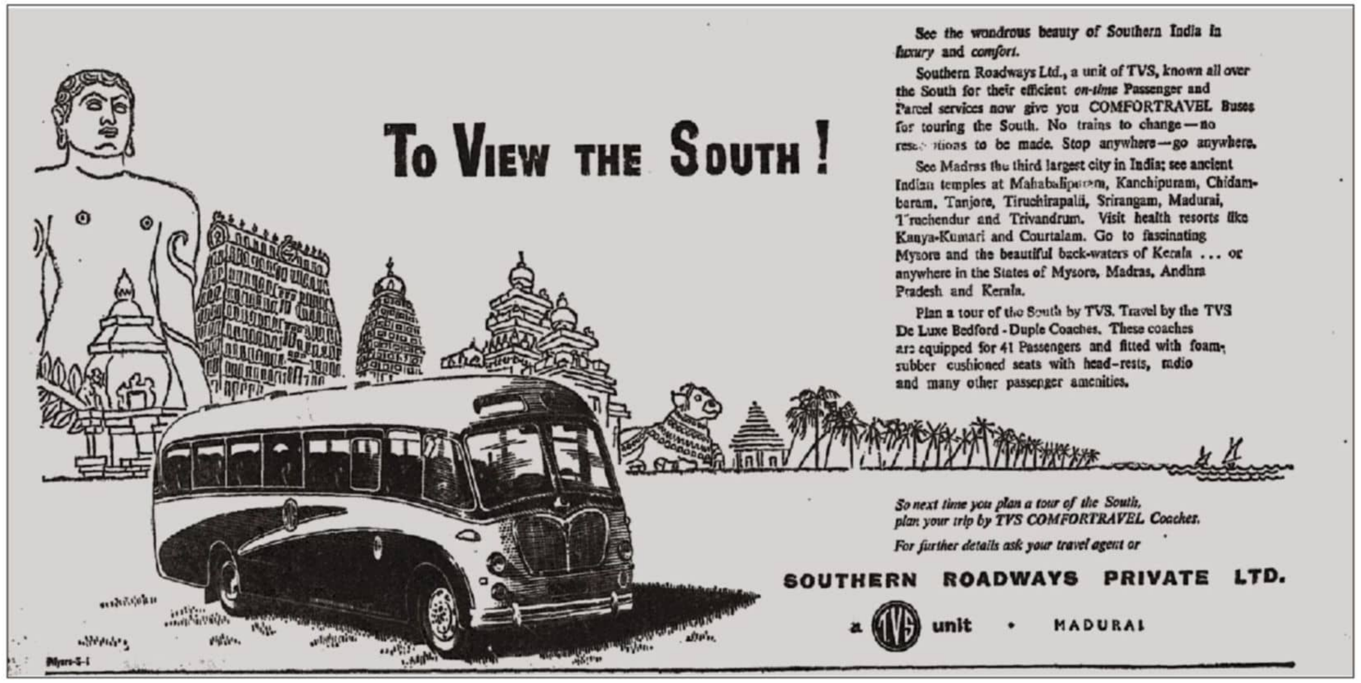


ABOVE: A Duple bodied Albion supplied to Delhi in 1948.(Duple 70 Years of Coachbuilding) operated jack-knife doors. Operators such as Autoservico in Vasco da Gama and MSB Caculo in Panjim commonly used these single-deck coaches. They were a frequent sight in the region, providing reliable transportation and reflecting the preferences of that era. Duple 41-seat bodies were mounted on Bedford SB chassis and operated by Southern Roadways, a subsidiary of T.V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons Private Ltd, TVS, based in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, who were one of the largest private operators in India during the 1950s and 60s until nationalised.

Duple's customers in India ranged from royalty to corporate entities and showed the firm's ability to meet India's diverse transport needs. Duple-bodied coaches also contributed to the evolution of India's indigenous transport industry. This led to Duple's design features being emulated by local bus body builders, who adapted Duple's distinctive front designs, such as that of the Vega, into their own products. This practice underscored India's capacity to imitate designs from overseas manufacturers, ensuring that the legacy of British innovation continued to shape the visual appearance of India's transport fleets for generations to come.

As a footnote, six specially fitted-out Duple-bodied Bedford coaches departed from the UK in 1972 on a three month journey to India. The Viceroy coaches were carrying Comex 5, the fifth Commonwealth Expedition, made up of 180 young people on a "meet and make contact" expedition through Europe, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and finally to Singapore. Large, specially designed tents which fitted over the coach provide the only accommodation and all cooking and daily requirements were met by the travellers themselves. The six bodies were the last Viceroys to be built by Duple before the factory switched to the new all-metal Dominant body.





To View the South!

See the wondrous beauty of Southern India in *luxury* and *comfort.*

Southern Roadways Ltd., a unit of TVS, known all over the South for their efficient *on-time* Passenger and Parcel services now give you COMFORTRAVEL Buses for touring the South. No trains to change—no reservations to be made. Stop anywhere—go anywhere.

See Madras the third largest city in India; see ancient Indian temples at Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli, Srirangam, Madurai, Tiruchendur and Trivandrum. Visit health resorts like Kanya-Kumari and Courtalam. Go to fascinating Mysore and the beautiful back-waters of Kerala ... or anywhere in the States of Mysore, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Plan a tour of the South by TVS. Travel by the TVS De Luxe Bedford-Duple Coaches. These coaches are equipped for 41 Passengers and fitted with foam-rubber cushioned seats with head-rests, radio and many other passenger amenities.

So next time you plan a tour of the South,
plan your trip by TVS COMFORTRAVEL Coaches.

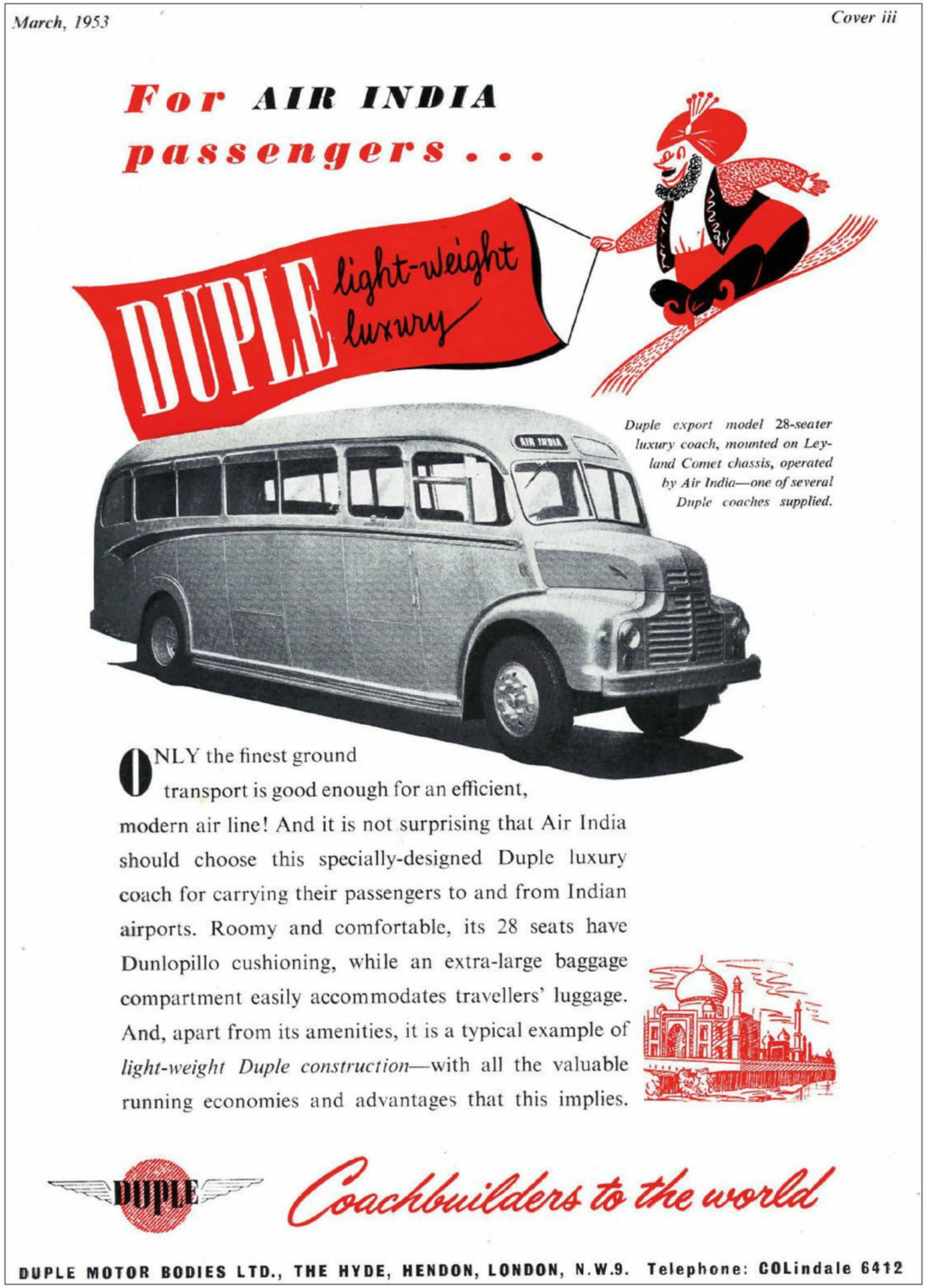
For further details ask your travel agent or

SOUTHERN ROADWAYS PRIVATE LTD.

a TVS unit • MADURAI

TOP: TVS Bedford Duple coach MDU 6199 as illustrated in a 1960 brochure. (Praveen Kumar Collection)

BOTTOM: A 1957 Southern Roadways advertisement for its TVS unit illustrating one of its "De Luxe Bedford-Duple Coaches" in which it is described as a "Comfortravel" bus. (Praveen Kumar Collection)



March, 1953 *Cover iii*

For AIR INDIA passengers . . .

DUPLE light-weight luxury

Duple export model 28-seater luxury coach, mounted on Leyland Comet chassis, operated by Air India—one of several Duple coaches supplied.

ONLY the finest ground transport is good enough for an efficient, modern air line! And it is not surprising that Air India should choose this specially-designed Duple luxury coach for carrying their passengers to and from Indian airports. Roomy and comfortable, its 28 seats have Dunlopillo cushioning, while an extra-large baggage compartment easily accommodates travellers' luggage. And, apart from its amenities, it is a typical example of *light-weight Duple construction*—with all the valuable running economies and advantages that this implies.

DUPLE Coachbuilders to the world

DUPLE MOTOR BODIES LTD., THE HYDE, HENDON, LONDON, N.W.9. Telephone: COLindale 6412

ABOVE: A March 1953 Duple advertisement illustrating a Leyland Comet supplied to Air India in which Duple proudly proclaims that it is "Coachbuilders to the world". (Leyland Journal)

Overland To Kano Across The Sahara

by Ronald Bird

This article first appeared in the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association (OSPA) journal The Overseas Pensioner. David Suffolk came across it and it is reproduced here courtesy of OSPA. Unless otherwise stated all the illustrations appeared in the article.

I had always wanted to see the country and the variety of peoples on the southern edges of the Sahara north of the Nigerian frontier. Returning from leave to Northern Nigeria it was no longer feasible to organise a camel caravan from Tripoli as in the days of the early explorers, and so I had little choice but to go by motor transport of some kind from Algiers, south along one of the desert routes or pistes to West Africa. Hence I found myself early on the morning of Thursday 20th April 1950 outside the offices of the Societe Africaine des Transports Tropicaux in the Rue Sidi Carnot in Algiers.

I had made enquiries earlier in the year and Thomas Cook had booked me a seat on a 'bus' of the S.A.T.T. that travelled from Algiers to Fort Lamy in Tchad by the Route du Hoggar and Kano. Eventually a curious looking silver painted four wheel drive vehicle with balloon tyres rolled up. It had "Alger-Zinder-Kano-Fort Lamy" painted on the sides, took up to 8 passengers, carried a considerable amount of freight and luggage, and had steel sand ladders fastened on the back. The other passengers appeared to be 4 or 5 fairly non-descript Frenchmen and after a lengthy stowage of freight and luggage we were shepherded on board by the driver who spoke in a thick Provencal accent.

DAY 1 (Thursday 20/4/50) – ALGIERS TO LAGHOUAT

Finally we got away from Algiers at about 7.30 a.m. and climbed the steep hillsides south of the city before plunging into the lush green countryside that rose tier on tier, white houses gleaming in the sun above the blue Mediterranean. It had rained hard the previous day and the first 30 kilometres of the trip were across a plateau covered with dark green vegetation with red-brown earth showing starkly amongst the vines. Then we climbed up the gorge of the Chiffa River to cross the passes of the Eastern Atlas Mountains. Suddenly it grew bitterly cold and the sun hid behind glowering storm clouds and a terrific hailstorm burst upon us. Even with winter clothes and an overcoat it was bitingly cold and a welcome stop was made at the town of Berroughia for lunch. Soon the lush green country and the profusion of wild flowers, so breath-taking at first sight, began to give way to a browner drier land. Green crops were left behind and we drove across a stony and hilly plateau with cold rain pouring down. It was dark and freezing when we reached Laghouat where the Hotel Saharien proved warm and comfortable. We had covered 432 kilometres on a rough and twisty but mostly tarred road in about 12 hours; this was good progress compared with a day's travel further south.

DAY 2 (Friday 21/4/50) – LAGHOUAT TO GHARDAIA

The next morning was sunny but still cold as we drove through the crowded streets of Laghouat past a very fine looking mosque. Following a made road across a stony plateau we reached the oasis of Tilrempt by late morning and stopped briefly at an old fort, the first of the 'Beau Geste' type forts that we saw. Finally a steep descent through rocky hills brought us into the hollow of Ghardaia and an overnight stop at the Hotel Transatlantique.

DAY 3 (Saturday 22/4/50) – GHARDAIA TO EL GOLEA

The following morning Saturday we made a late start as the bus needed servicing and repairs. There was time to explore Ghardaia, visit the suk and see something of the holy city of the M'Zabites on the edge of the town. The tarred road of Ghardaia soon deteriorated into a stony track and before long difficult sandy stretches appeared interspersed with small dunes which meant the line of the piste was continually changing. There was no sign of life until we got to the small bordj or old fort of Hassi Fahl which was a poste de secours maintained by the Genie or Army Engineers. The guardien of the bordj appeared more negro than Arab but there were quite a number of Sha'amba Arab encampments with their flocks in the vicinity. One began at last to have some impression of the immensity of the desert, so like a sea in many ways, and by now we were beginning to feel the increasing heat. This was the edge of the real desert country with barren rocky hills, often flat topped, and steep-sided valleys or oueds with a few tufts of wiry grass growing in them. We reached El Golea just as it got dark, cramped and stiff, tired and dusty, and were glad of the comfortable S.A.T.T. hotel to stay at after our 865 kilometres from Algiers.

DAY 4 (Sunday 23/4/50) EL GOLEA

El Golea proved to be a large straggling oasis. Alhough the town of small flat-roofed houses with mosque and suk was not that big, it was clean and beautifully laid out with palm lined streets. Just south of El Golea the two main routes across the desert divided; the Route du Hoggar going due south and then veering east for Tamanrasset and Agades; the Route de Tanezrouft going west and then south for Gao and Timbuctoo. The Hotel Dal Piaz at El Golea was not only a comfortable, cool building in the Moorish style with a fine rose garden, but it was to be the last of any reasonable comfort before we moved onto the harsh environment and blinding heat of the true desert wastes. When we arrived at El Golea the driver of the bus warned us of the hazards of desert travel and told us that the gerbas or goatskin waterbags tied on each side of the bus were our water reserve in case of emergency. He also advised us to provide ourselves with emergency food supplies and try and buy tinned sardines etc. in the market.

DAY 5 (Monday 24/4/50) – EL GOLEA TO IN SALAH

We left El Golea on Monday morning well before dawn for the long hard drive to In Salah, first along a sandy track but then climbing up to the endless gravelly wastes of the Tademait Plateau. The heat began to be really oppressive for the first time and the going got rougher and stonier as the bus lurched and bumped along over the rocks. Suddenly the bus seemed to stagger and we came to a halt with a clanking noise to find we had broken a mainspring.

After 3 hours or so for repairs we set off again across the interminable rocky plain through a growing heat haze; visibility was quite short with continuous mirages and we seemed to drive eternally across a small flat island fixed in space without getting anywhere. We stopped briefly at Fort Miribel, desolate in the extreme, now deserted but once occupied by the Foreign Legion. Early evening brought us to the southern edge of the plateau with a steep escarpment leading down to a sandy plain. We appeared to sail across this following occasional heaps of stones which marked the general direction, swerving sometimes to the left or to the right to avoid bad patches of loose sand, the first signs of the dreaded 'fesh-fesh sand'. As darkness fell we got onto a track which brought us, after 2 or 3 more hours, to the red mud hotel run by the S.A.T.T. at In Salah.

DAY 6 (Tuesday 25/4/50) - EL GOLEA TO ARAK GORGES

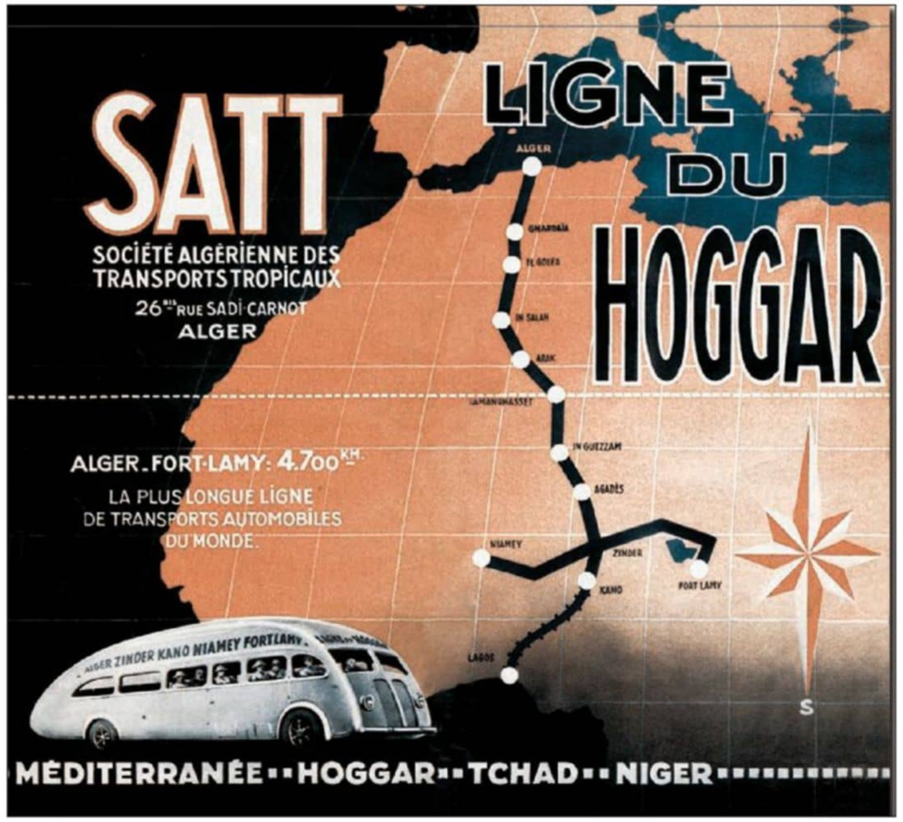
In Salah proved to be a small town and oasis with the usual civil and military buildings but not much else except the great sand dunes which were encroaching into the town. Here we took on an African assistant to help the driver in the main desert crossing which still lay ahead; he looked to be from further south in central Africa but was in fact a Sha'amba Arab from El Golea. The fact that In Salah was historically one of the biggest slave markets in the whole desert region helps to explain some of the tribal admixture. The first stretch south from In Salah was slow and difficult going with wide sandy dunes but later we reached a firmer piste which got more and more rocky amongst small hills and flat rocky outcrops. When we stopped in the afternoon for a quick meal the assistant driver made mint tea for all and very refreshing it proved in the already searing heat. Mint tea was to become our standard refreshment from now on and appeared as if by magic whenever we stopped for long. By now the other passengers had been reduced to three Frenchmen, an engineer and two well drillers, going all the way to Fort Lamy, but none of them had experienced desert travel any more than I had. We began to climb into the foothills of the Hoggar Mountains and reached the massive Arak gorges as the sun set. Mighty cliffs reared up on each side with castle like walls overshadowing a tiny bordj or campment where we were to spend the night. At first sight it looked dirty and tumbledown but the gardien, an ex-Genie Frenchman married to an Arab, produced a passable meal.

DAY 7 (Wednesday 26/4/50) – ARAK GORGES TO TAMANRASSET

We were roused next morning with mugs of strong black coffee and left well before dawn along a stony track through a succession of gorges and then small valleys which broadened out as we climbed up to a sandy plain scattered with enormous boulders and great craggy hills. We crossed numerous dry river beds with a good deal of dried-up vegetation and here for the first time we saw wild game, first a single gazelle, then a herd of six, and finally another just in front of the bus. Climbing out of a rocky river bed we again broke a spring and limped on to the bordj of In Eker where we stopped for 3 hours to carry out repairs. The driver of a big diesel truck going north stopped to help us, the first vehicle we had met on the piste for two days. We then pushed on through stony country to the village of In Amguel, the first settlement we had seen since In Salah, though we had seen a small caravan of 5 camels earlier in the day. We were now in the country of the Touareg and we began to climb up steadily through a wild rocky and mountainous landscape to the stony plateau of Tamanrasset which is some 4300 feet above sea level. Shortly after 7 p.m. we reached the S.A.T.T. hotel at Tamanrasset, or Fort Laperrine, cramped from the bus and famished with hunger.

DAY 8 (Thursday 27/4/50) - TAMANRASSET

Tamanrasset was the French administrative centre of the Hoggar region of the central Sahara and there seemed quite a number of French military and civilians about, and though not a Touareg town, for they lived mostly in scattered settlements throughout the region,


SATT
SOCIÉTÉ ALGÉRIENNE DES TRANSPORTS TROPICAUX
26 BIS RUE SADI-CARNOT
ALGER
LIGNE DU HOGGAR
ALGER
GHARDAÏA
EL GOLEA
IN SALAH
ARAK
TAMANRASSET
IN GUEZZAM
AGADÈS
NIAMEY
ZINDER
KANO
FORT LAMY
LAGOS
ALGER.FORT-LAMY: 4.700 KM.
LA PLUS LONGUE LIGNE DE TRANSPORTS AUTOMOBILES DU MONDE.
ALGER ZINDER KANO NIAMEY FORTLAMY
S
MÉDITERRANÉE HOGGAR TCHAD NIGER

ABOVE: A SATT advertisement showing the route taken across the Sahara.

there were many Touareg about, their faces covered up to the eyes with the traditional blue veil. We had come 2105 kilometres from Algiers and we were to spend a rest day here before starting on the toughest and most desolate stretch of the piste to In Guezzam, on the frontier of the Southern Annexe of Algeria and Agades in the Territoire du Niger. There was time to look around, check in at the offices of the Annexe, and visit the small fort where the celebrated French hermit of the Hoggar, Pere de Foucauld, was murdered in December 1916 by Senussi tribesmen. The buildings were nearly all of the same red mud as those at In Salah as the rainfall is minimal though there were plenty of tamarisk trees throughout the small town.

DAY 9 (Friday 28/4/50) – TAMANRASSET TO SOMEWHERE SHORT OF IN GUEZZAM

The hotel was the worst since leaving Algiers and we were all glad to get away early on the morning of Friday 28th. April. While at Tamanrasset the heat had not been oppressive as there had been a thick dusty harmattan wind blowing. We left at 4.15 a.m. hoping to do the long trackless stretch to In Guezzam in a day if we did not stick too often in the soft sand. The first part of the route through the mountains was rocky and stony but after about two hours we came down into a dry stream bed between craggy hills; we followed this for another two hours or so tryingg to avoid the fesh-fesh sand but were twice stuck fast or ensablé and had laboriously to dig our way out. It was rather like navigating a river where the sandbanks are changing continually with the current and you only find where they are when you run aground. We passed a Genie unit trying to consolidate one of the worst sections and then came out into a wide flat sandy plain, firm at first but soon deteriorating into the most difficult and treacherous part of the whole journey. It was now nearly midday, the heat: extreme, the interior of the bus like a roasting oven, and the light blinding, and in the midst of it all the engine of the bus spluttered and petered out. It proved to be nothing worse than a blocked fuel feed but the heat of the engine made repairs long and tedious. We went on, the bus weaving along between rocks first in one direction then in another, sometimes following the wheel tracks of a previous vehicle, sometimes avoiding all other wheel tracks, sometimes on firm going and sometimes on soft sand which soon deteriorated into fesh-fesh. It was here that knowledge of the desert showed itself as the driver expertly felt his way along, but in spite of his cleverness in avoiding the worst places, we were ensablé again four times.

By now a drill had been established and as soon as the bus stuck in the sand the passengers all jumped out, grabbed sand hoes and dug the sand out from the front of the wheels, then the steel sand ladders were put down to get the bus moving, and then the whole process repeated until one reached firmer ground. We made slow but exhausting progress even as the extreme heat began to wane a little towards evening. As the sun was setting we came upon a group of men working on a bad section of the piste with a French sergeant of the Genie in charge. He insisted on us stopping, took us into a tiny stone hut where he lived and gave us all sweet mint tea. The hospitality of the Sahara is for all travellers and he was evidently one of those for whom the desert, in spite of all it's rigours and harshness, seemed to have a compelling attraction. We pushed on but as it got dark we had our fifth and sixth ensablements of the day; they were real bad ones and everyone was quite exhausted. Even so the driver insisted on going on for another two hours in the dark and then gave up quite overcome, though we were well short of In Guezzam. Our evening meal would have been dry bread only if the four Arab passengers we had taken on at Tamanrasset had not produced some cold meat and shared it round. Almost too tired to eat we all collapsed on the soft sand and fell asleep at the foot of a rocky cliff under the blazing desert stars.

DAY 10 (Saturday 29/4/50) – SOMEWHERE SHORT OF IN GUEZZAM (ALGERIA) TO SOMEWHERE 150 KM SOUTH OF IN GUEZZAM (NIGER)

We were up in the cool before dawn and ploughed on through tricky patches of loose sand across a wide featureless plain until we reached In Guezzam late in the morning. In Guezzam marked the boundary of Algeria and Niger but consisted only of a small bordj run by a Frenchman in radio contact with Tamanrasset and able to report all vehicles passing through this checkpoint. We rested up during the burning heat of the day and left late in the afternoon following a difficult and treacherous sandy track with plenty of evidence to show that other vehicles had stuck in the shifting sands. We stopped as the sun set beside a small Touareg caravan of about 30 camels going north. Some of them spoke Hausa so it was with some surprise on each side that we had quite an animated chat. The bus then drove on in the moonlight and we made good but slow progress until we made camp 150 kilometres south of In Guezzam. We slept again on the soft sand after a supper of a rough soup-stew produced by Amharak the assistant driver.

DAY 11 (Sunday 30/4/50) – SOMEWHERE 150 KM SOUTH OF IN GUEZZAM TO AGADES

We made a late start the next day as the driver still seemed exhausted after the two previous days. The going had improved and we made quite good progress to the bordj of In Abbangarit, a dilapidated mud hut close to two enormous wells where vast herds of camels, goats and donkeys, and for the first time south of the desert, cattle were watered. The people were Touareg though the herd boys looked like the Fulani of Nigeria but more heavily built. We drove on and suddenly met another vehicle, the first for two days; as it proved to be another S.A.T.T. bus going north we stopped to exchange news, I found that there were three British missionaries from Ibadan going home across the desert; we exchanged Algerian francs for West African francs and they told me that they were the last northbound bus of the season before conditions made travel too difficult. We passed Teguidda where we saw the first permanent settlements we had seen south of Tamanrasset.

The heat was still intense and it was the third hottest day of the trip but the piste was stony and tufts of dried grass and some thorn scrub were beginning to appear. We stopped to rest beside a thorn tree that actually had some greenish leaves, and then strung blankets from the bus to the tree while we ate a stew of tinned meat and beans that Ambarak prepared. Late afternoon found us on the piste again through gradually increasing thorn scrub until we reached Agades shortly after dark. The S.A.T.T. 'hotel' was a dirty half-ruined, mud rest house with small dark stuffy rooms, filthy mattresses and dirty ragged blankets on iron bedsteads. We all pulled our beds out into the courtyard and slept again under the stars, waking up in the morning to see the curious pyramid shaved mud minaret of the Agades mosque.

DAY 12 (Monday 1/5/50) - AGADES

Agades was a small town of reddish mud buildings with a mixed population of about 5000, mostly sub-Saharan peoples but quite a lot of Touareg and some Arabs from Algeria. The European population was about 30 and although the French administration here in Niger was civilian rather than military there were still a lot of soldiers in evidence. We all had to report to the Police and Customs authorities as travellers coming from Algeria. Looking round the town I found a large and thriving market and that camel caravans still came from the north, particularly of course from Bilma bringing salt. The Touareg and other peoples all seemed to speak Hausa and were prepared to chat away in the friendliest fashion.

DAY 13 (Tuesday 2/5/50) – AGADES TO TANOUT

We left late on the morning of Tuesday 2nd May as the driver and his friends had had a party the previous evening. The thorn scrub got thicker as we travelled south and herds of camel, cattle and sheep were to be seen as well as donkeys and also a few horses.

We stopped for a meal in the shade of a large thorn tree not far from an enormous well where thousands of beasts of all kinds were being watered. The well at Tadelaka was vast, about 20 feet in diameter going down through apparent solid rock for 150 to 200 feet to abundant water. There were about 12 watering pullies with leather-buckets lowered on long ropes and then drawn up by bullocks each in charge of a. small child seated on it's back. These people were Touareg but darker than those further north and obviously of mixed race; they all spoke Hausa and returned my greetings cheerfully. Some distance away there were other people sitting under a tree waiting their turn to bring up their cattle; they too spoke Hausa but seemed different and then I realised that they were in fact Fulani, though much darker generally than Fulani in Nigeria, and clearly with a strong pagan admixture. They were only too happy to tell me about themselves and claimed to be of the Wodabe Fulani clan with Rahaji cattle; their wanderings were mostly in Niger and down along the Nigerian border. We drove on through the thorn scrub and by evening reached Tanout, a small town where there was a campement with a gardien. It was just a rough mud rest house without any beds and we slept on the floor.

DAY 14 (Wednesday 3/5/50) – TANOUT TO ZINDER

The next day we had a fairly easy run to Zinder, the headquarter town of the whole area. At Zinder there was a multitude of formalities to sort out with Police and Customs before we could do anything. Our driver still seemed exhausted and we were to stay the night here at the Hotel Zangou which was run by a Greek; the food was passable but we were stuffed five people into a small cramped room. I looked round the town and the market and then went to call on the Administrateur for whom I carried a letter of introduction. Zinder appeared to be a town of about 25,000 people with a large and important market, not very different from other towns in Hausaland, but the Government quarters were all rather poor mud houses crammed together in a small area, while the military had an extensive camp on the edge of the town.

DAY 15 (Thursday 4/5/50) – ZINDER (NIGER) TO KANO (NIGERIA)

The next morning, the 4th of May, we set off for the final leg of 290 kilometres on a gravel track to Kano, crossing the Nigerian frontier near Babura. The bus made for the Hotel de France in Kano where I was to part company with my French friends having shared the hazards of the desert and travelled 3760 kilometres in 15 days with them from Algiers. They were keen to get on their way to Fort Lamy and I had to report for duty after my leave. Opinion was that we had been lucky to escape sand storms and major breakdowns and had had a fairly easy passage across the Sahara.

LGER·ZINDER·KANO·NIAMEY·FORT-LAMY

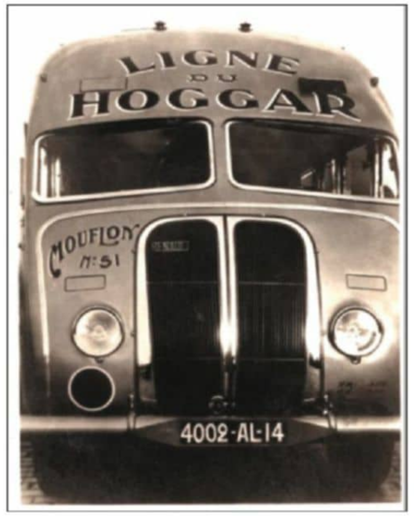
ABOVE: A SATT bus broken down in the desert.

ALGER ZINDER KANO NIAMEY FORT LAMY

ABOVE: A different SATT bus, this time on a paved road.

BORDJ RENÉ ESTIENNE
SATT

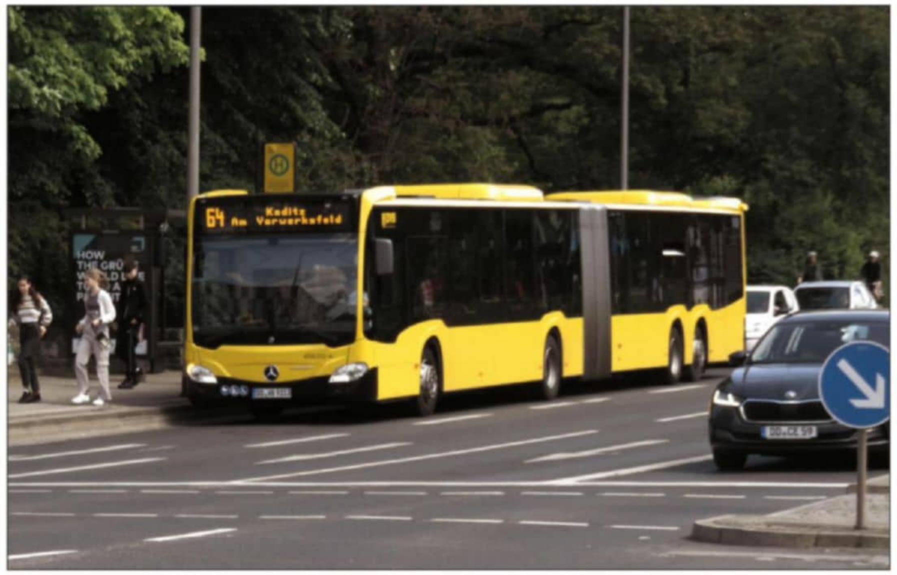
ABOVE: A SATT bus arriving at Bordj René Estienne, Algeria.



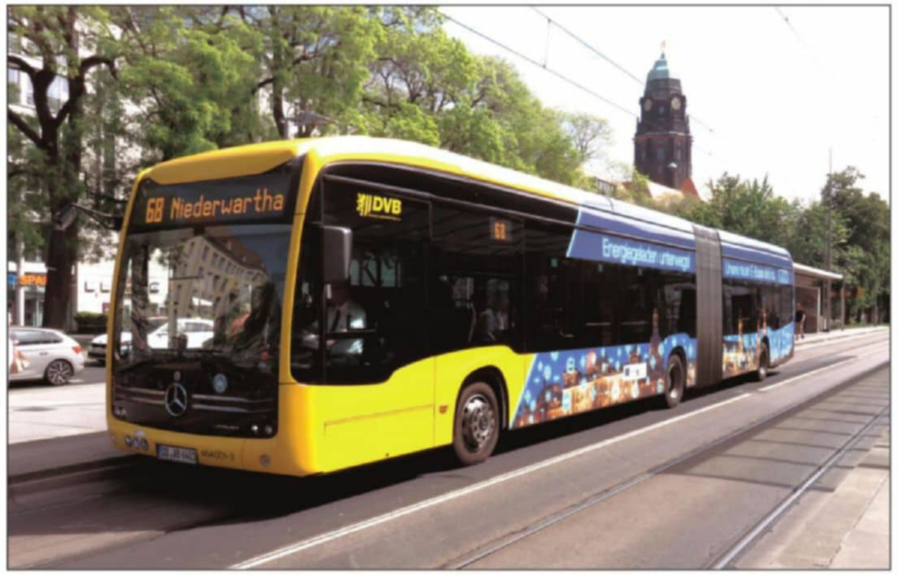
RIGHT: Another SATT bus,a Renault, number 51 Mouflon (mountain sheep). (delcampe.net)

Eastern Germany

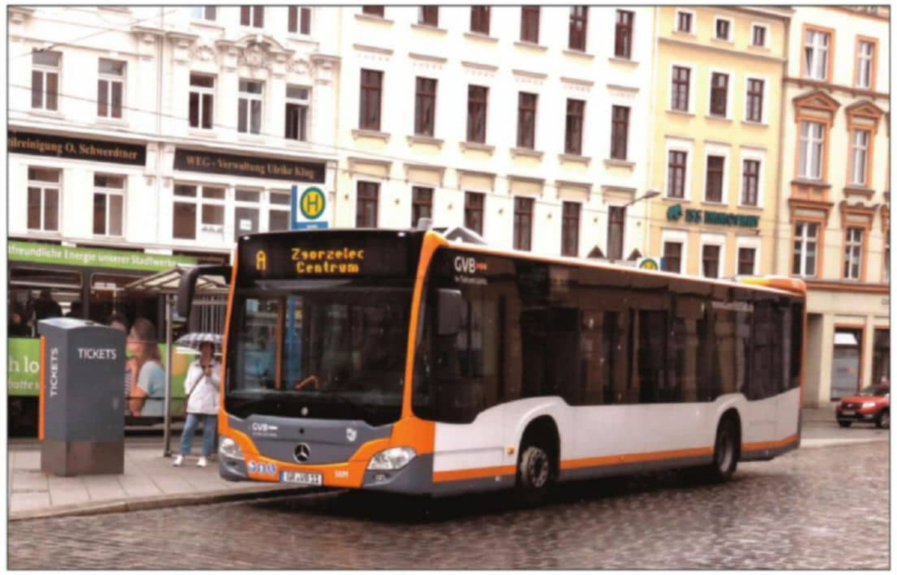
by Mike Power



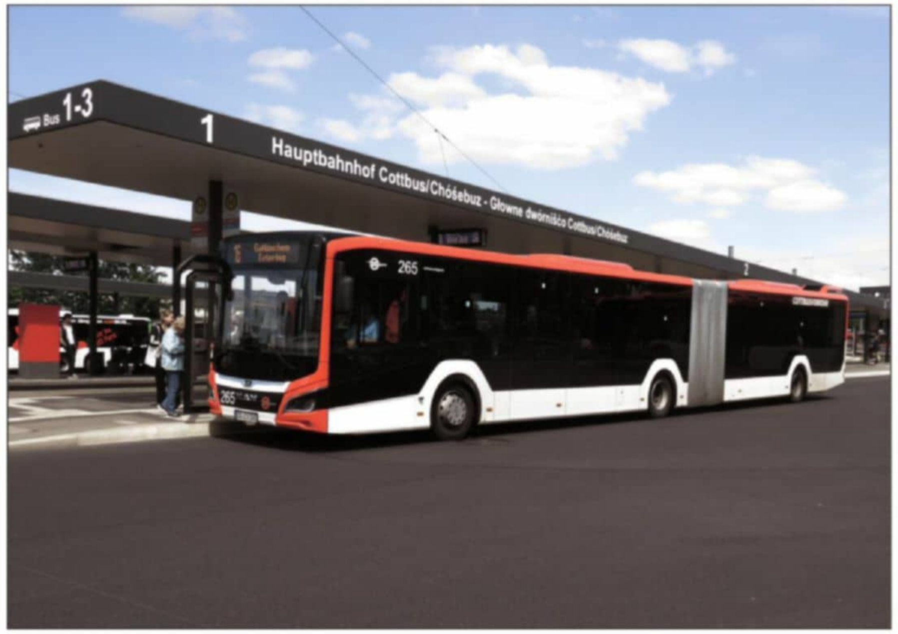
LEFT: Dresdner Verkehrsbetrieb 459 313-4 (DD-VB 9313) is a 2022 Mercedes-Benz Capacity L on route 64 in the northern suburbs.



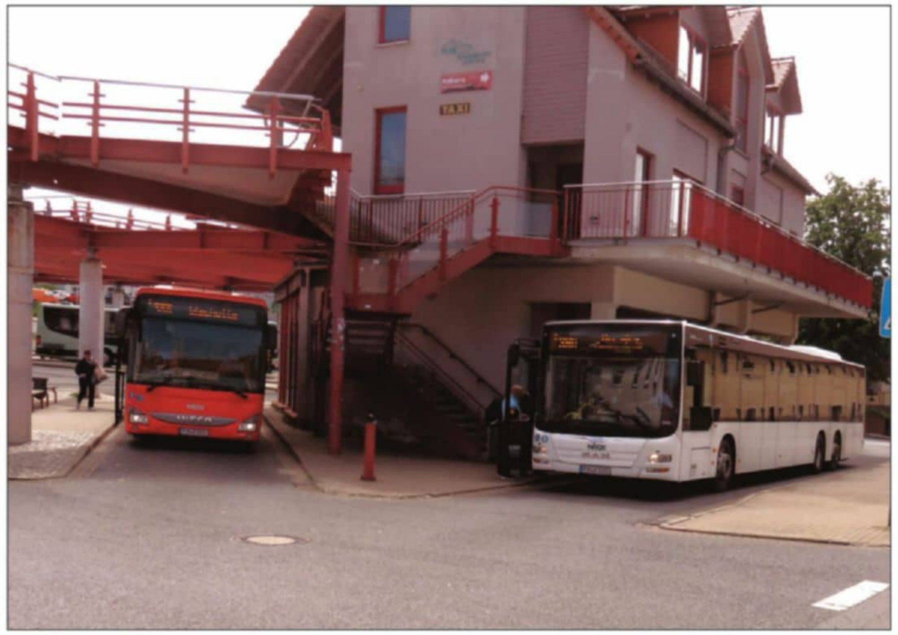
RIGHT: Dresdner Verkehrsbetrieb 464 001-3 (DD-VB 6401) is a Mercedes-Benz eCitaro G electric bus with a pantograph located over the driver's cab. It was seen at Prager Strasse in the city centre with the tower of the Neue Rathaus visible behind it.



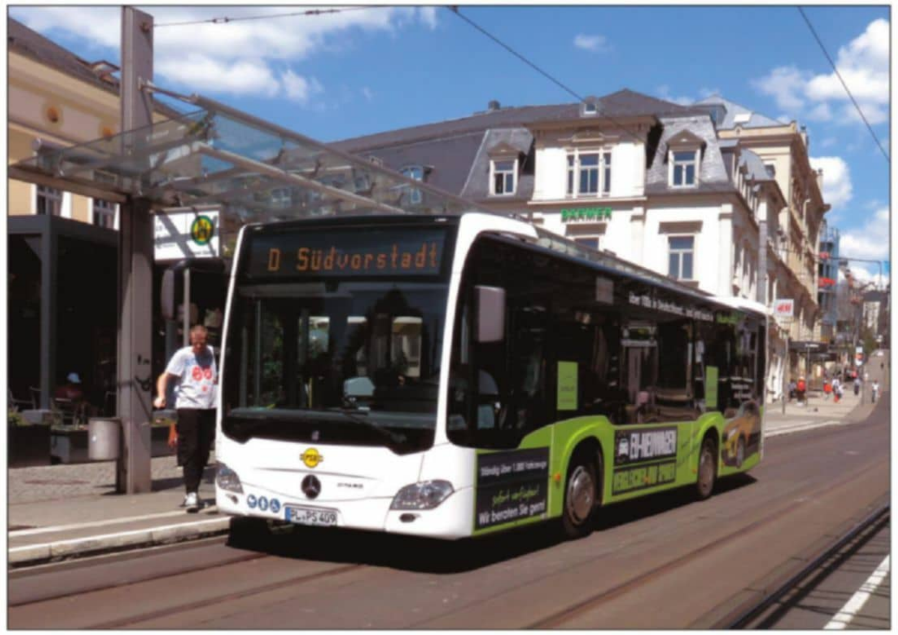
LEFT: Goerlitzer Verkehrsbetrieb 5511 (GR-VB 11), a 2018 Mercedes-Benz Citaro on the cross-border route to Zgorzelec, Poland, a route which is now part of GVB's urban network. The undertaking has ordered hydrogen-powered trams for delivery in 2026, with the possibility that the existing tram network could be extended across the border to Poland eventually.



RIGHT: Cottbusverkehr 265 (CB-CV 265) is a 2023 MAN Lion's City 19 Efficient Hybrid, seen at the bus and rail station terminus.



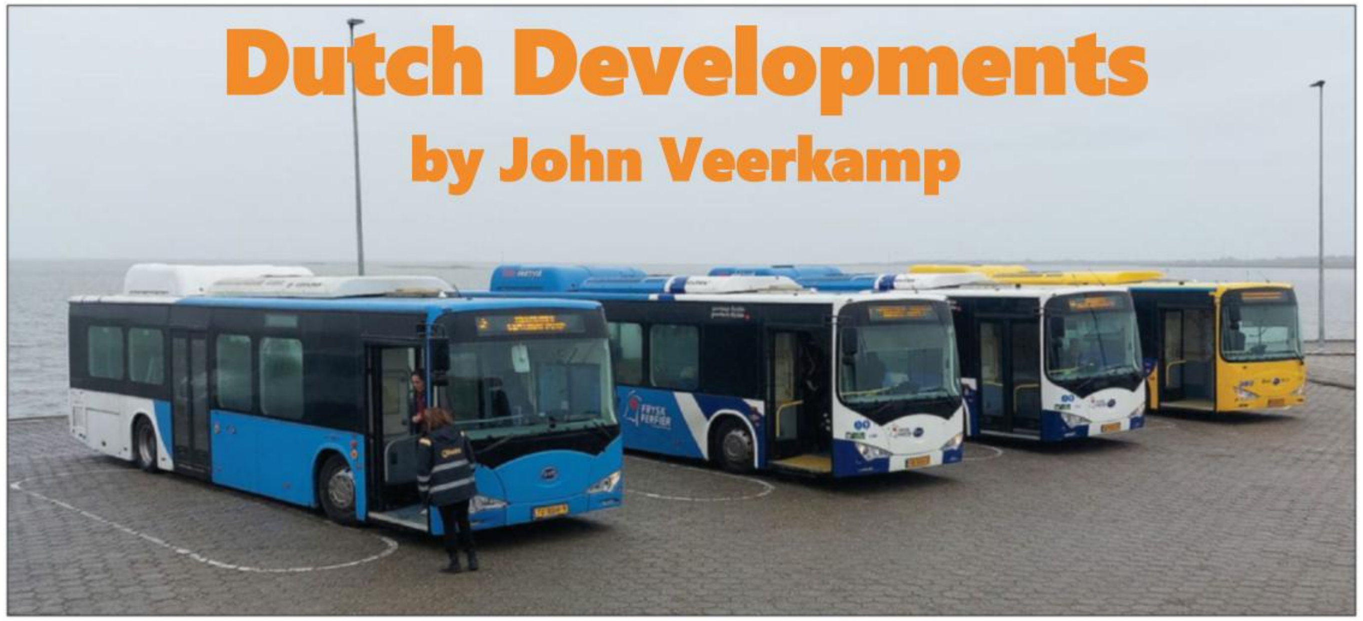
LEFT: For a town of just 10,000 inhabitants, Dippoldiswalde has a very large bus station where every half hour up to 7 buses meet to exchange passengers. A 10 year old Iveco Crossway LE in red, PIR-R 5513, and an all-over white second-hand MAN Lion's City LLE NL363 from DVB Dresden, PIR-R 1722, are in the RVSOE (Regionalverkehr Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge) fleet.



RIGHT: Plauener Strassenbahn has just 11 buses in its fleet including this short Mercedes-Benz Citaro, PL-PS 409, dating from 2018, seen at the stop named Tunnel, in the centre of the small hilly city.

Dutch Developments

by John Veerkamp



ABOVE: Qbuzz Fryslân (the official name of the Friesland province is Fryslân), only uses electric buses on the four Wadden Islands Schiermonnikoog, Ameland, Vlieland and Terschelling. Buses used are existing ex Arriva buses, secondhand buses and buses re-assigned from Groningen-services. On Schiermonnikoog the six BYD ebus 12 Greencity buses dating from 2013 were among the first electric buses in the Netherlands. They were Arriva 3001-3006 and are now Qbuzz 1151-1156. They are currently (February-March 2025) loosing their blue-white Arriva colours and are being wrapped in the new yellow-blue Qbuzz colours. As often one of the six buses is on the mainland for maintenance. Bluekens (BYD representative) had made a similar vehicles long-term available. It carried Arriva number 139 and now is administratively Qbuzz 1157. Seen on the ferry pier of Schiermonnikoog on 24/02/25 are 1157, 1154 and 1155 still in Arriva livery, and 1151 in the new yellow Qbuzz-livery. (All photos by the author)

The situation in the Netherlands in 2024 was characterized by the problems of bus deliveries by Van Hool, Ebusco, VDL and IVECO, and the, partly as a consequence, completely chaotic transfer of the Fryslan (Friesland) and Zuid-Holland Noord concessions from Arriva to Qbuzz on 15 December 2024.

Only two concessions changed hands in 2024, but both quite large and both from Arriva to Qbuzz. This meant that Arriva lost employment for some 500 buses and Qbuzz added some 500 buses to its fleet. As Qbuzz did not lose any concessions, they did not have any spare buses to replace the late deliveries of new buses. And relations between the companies are such that Arriva was not going to rent any buses out to Qbuzz.

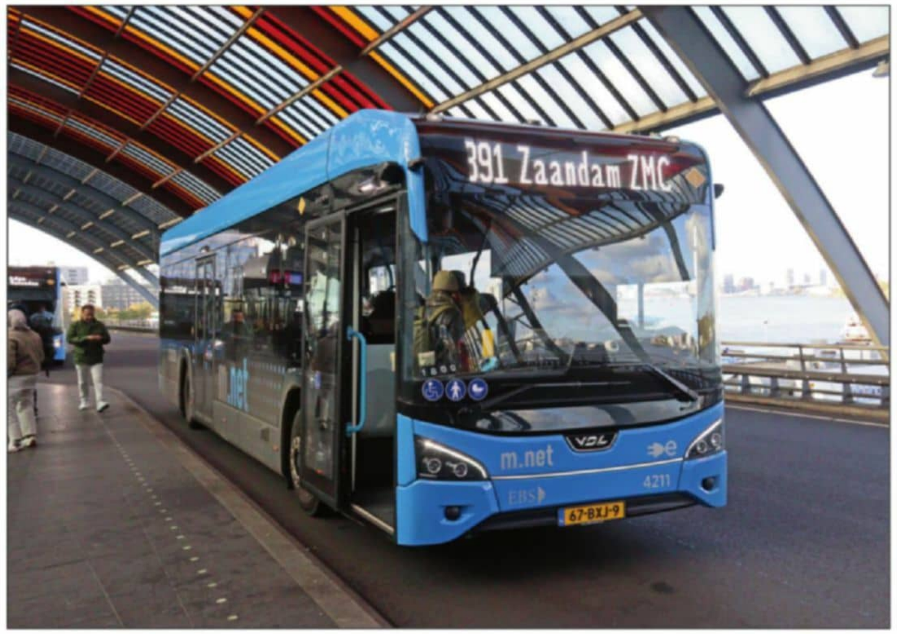
Bus delivery problems started with the bankruptcy of Van Hool. Qbuzz had ordered 112 A15LE E and A13LE E electric buses for the new Zuid-Holland Noord concession and 54 A15LE E electric buses as Qliners in the Groningen-Drenthe concession. As VDL, who acquired part of the Van Hool business, announced that it would only continue the coach building activities, it became clear that Qbuzz was not getting its buses.

VDL, despite opening a new electric bus-building facility in Roeselare, Belgium, was unable to deliver most buses that had been ordered. EBS had an order for 199 new Citea Electrics for the concession Zaanstad-Waterland which started in December 2023. None of the new buses had been delivered. By the beginning of 2025 still a dozen deliveries were outstanding. The buses for Eindhoven have been delivered partially, the ones for Amsterdam have not been delivered, neither were the ones for Arriva Brabant. Most buses have been built but supply chain problems make that essential parts are still missing.

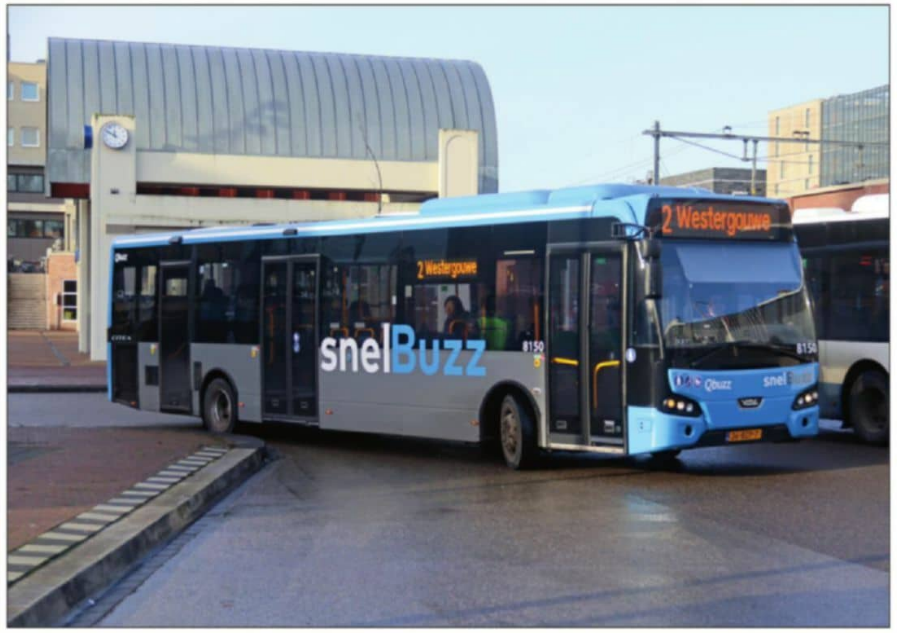
Much has already been said about Ebusco. Production is still suspended at the beginning of 2025. To reduce costs, a part of the personnel was laid off before December 31, 2024, with only the minimal legal payment requirements. In January 2025, a closed auction of spare parts was held, with which they hoped to raise some 5 million Euro. If a company is so stretched for cash that it needs to sell its parts stocks, the signs aren't good. Ebusco intends to become an OED (Original Equipment Designer) instead of an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer). On 7 February 2025 it was announced that two Chinese representatives of Gotion, the battery manufacturer, would join the management team. In the meantime, efforts to finish buses in stock seem to be advancing only very slowly. On February 18, 2025, EBS announced that it would finally receive the 31 Ebusco ordered two years ago for the Lelystad/IJsselmond region mid-2025, but instead of 13,5 meter buses they would receive 12-meter buses that were partly built for the canceled Qbuzz Groningen-Drenthe order. Ebusco's share price fell below 0.68 Euro in February 2025, down from 150 Euro in November 2021. Not a sign of investor confidence.

Iveco received a large order from Qbuzz: 199 diesel Crossway for the new Friesland concession, and 102 IVECO Crossway LE ELEC, 15 10.7 meter Iveco/Heuliez E-Way and 23 Iveco/Heuliez E-Way for the ZHN concession. The Crossways are built in the Czech Republic, the Heuliez in France. Neither factory managed to fulfill its promises and deliver on time. The diesels in Friesland were all registered in the Netherlands by December 31, 2024, but many were not finished and still needed equipment installed, livery finished, etcetera. The work was done hastily, some buses had leaking roofs as the sealing was forgotten. The electric buses, both from the Czech and French factories, were very late, with only around 45 of the 150 ordered present at the start of the concession. Even in February 2025 not all buses have been finished.

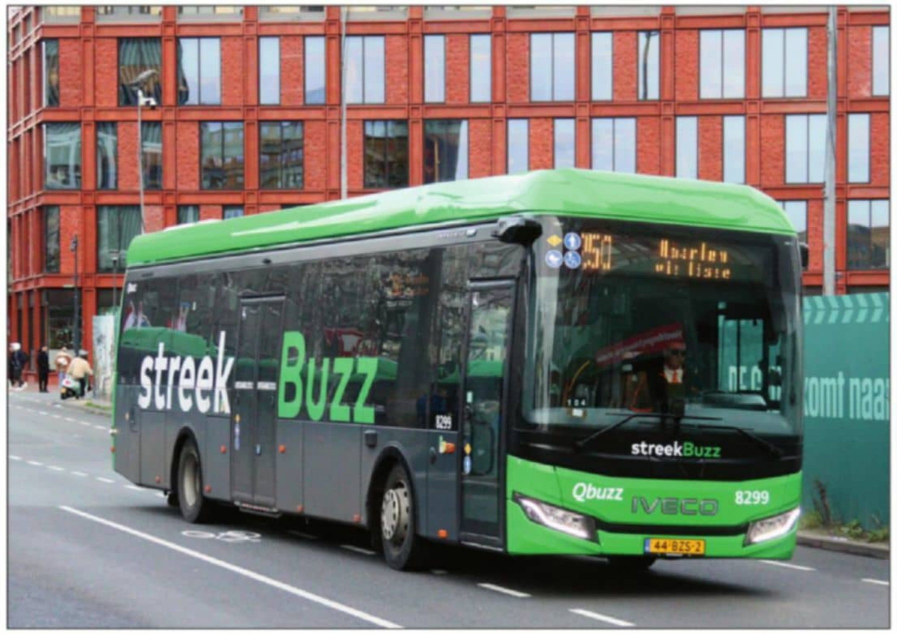
The lack of spare parts plays also for existing buses, with some being out of service in other concessions, leading to shortages of buses. Ebuscos in AML need batteries changed but Ebusco could not deliver. Another challenge that companies operating the new Ebusco and VDL buses that use carbon fibre for their bodies or body components, is that damage repairs are costly and time consuming, resulting in buses being out of service for quite some time, even when repairs are minor.



RIGHT: New VDL Citea LE122 Electric number 4211 of EBS is one of the buses in the blue m.net livery. The bus is in Amsterdam's central station on 22nd October 2024.



LEFT: The bankruptcy of Van Hool meant that Qbuzz did not receive the 112 electric buses ordered from the Belgian company. Instead, 50 Yutong were ordered, and several series of secondhand buses were acquired as a temporary measure. Reykjavik Excusrsions in Iceland had a series of 30 VDL Citea LLE120 buses dating from 2016, numbered 301-330. As two were damaged beyond repair, only 28 came to the Netherlands. Most received the blue-grey snelBuzz livery. Number 8150 is ex Reykjavik 314. It operates here on Gouda's city services on the 8th of January 2025.



RIGHT: The IVECO Crossway LE ELEX, built in the Czech Republic, was selected by Qbuzz for the standard regional services in Zuid-Holland Noord. The 102 buses are numbered 8201-8302. 8299 is seen in Leiden on 8th January 2025.

The concession map opposite shows the current (January 2025) situation. Qbuzz now operates, the Groningen-Drenthe, the Friesland, Utrecht City, the Zuid-Holland Noord, and the DMG-concessions. Arriva operates the Twente, Achterhoek-Rivierenland, Brabant West and Brabant Midden en Oost, and Limburg concessions. EBS is now responsible for Zaanstad-Waterland, Ijssel-Vecht, Haaglanden Streek and Voorne-Putten en Rozenburg. Keolis/Syntus operate Almere Stad en Streek and Utrecht Province. Transdev/Connexxion operate Noord-Holland Noord, Haarlem-IJmond, Amstelland-Meerlanden, Gooi en Vechtstreek, Hoekse-Waard – Goeree-Overflakkee and Zeeland. Transdev/Connexxion subsidiary Hermes operates Brabant Zuid-Oost, Nijmegen-Arnhem (as Breng) and Veluwe Zuid. Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam have their semi-public companies GVB, HTM and RET.

Concession Amsterdam

GVB operates buses, trams, metros and ferries. The bus fleet at the beginning of 2025 consists of 14 remaining Mercedes-Benz Citaro G of 2007/2010, 60 remaining VDL Citea SLF120 of 2011/2014, 31 VDL Citea SLFA180 of 2014/2016, 66 VDL Citea SLFA180 Electric of 2020-2022 and nine VDL Citea SLF120 Electric of 2020. A total of 180 buses, of which 75 electric and 111 articulated. New VDL Citea 2nd Gen Eletrics, both standard and articulated, should have been delivered in 2024, but the first one only appeared in January 2025 for testing. GVB has a subcontractor, Jan de Wit, who operated three Scania Citywide LE on routes 68 and 267, and two ex Connexxion Iveco Crossway LE on routes 232 and 233. These buses are in full GVB-livery.

Concession Haaglanden Stad (The Hague)

HTM operates buses, trams and light rail in Den Haag. The bus fleet beginning of 2025 consists of MAN Lion's City CNG buses 1001-1115, 1117-1119, 1132, 1201-1210 (with some withdrawn) and VDL Citea Electric 2001-2008. The first two new electric buses, Mercedes-Benz eCitaro 1401 and Mercedes-Benz eCitaro articulated bus 1501 were officially presented in 2024, but are only used for testing and evaluation. Series deliveries of 42 12-meter buses 1401-1442 and 60 18-meter buses 1501-1560 got under way beginning of 2025. In addition, HTM will receive 20 Mercedes-Benz Citaro Hybrid buses of EBS's existing fleet of Haaglanden Streek (Zoetermeer, Delft), which EBS replaces with new BYD electric buses. That means HTM's fleet of MAN CNG buses, dating from 2009-2011, will be fully replaced.

Concession Groningen-Drenthe (GD)

Qbuzz operates this large concession since 2009. The second phase, starting December 2019, saw the introduction of new buses numbered in the 7000-series. Some older 3000-series buses were retained and will be replaced by electric buses later. Qbuzz had ordered new Van Hool Qliner buses and Ebusco standard and articulated buses for 2024 but because of the Van Hool bankruptcy and the problems at Ebusco, these buses did not come. Qbuzz even canceled the Ebusco order. Older buses remain in service, while new ones are being ordered. It appears the Van Hool order will be replaced by Yutong. Qbuzz did receive two batches of Mercedes-Benz eCitaro articulated buses mid-2024: numbers 7468-7477 in the grey-black Qlink-livery and 7524-7547 in the light grey-yellow standard livery.

As it had already been agreed that some buses would be transferred to the new Friesland concession in December 2024, that arrangement was kept and 17 secondhand MAN and Volvo buses were bought from Bliva Buss in Sweden as a temporary replacement measure for Groningen-Drenthe: MAN NL223 Lion's City 7651-7661, Volvo B8RLE 6x2 8900RLE 7662-7666 and one Volvo B8RLE 4x2 8900RLE, 7667, all built in 2017. They were fully refurbished and are used as Qliners.

The large fleet of 394 buses and 13 minibuses is very varied with Mercedes-Benz Citaro, Citaro LE and Citaro G, Mercedes-Benz Capacity, Mercedes-Benz Integro L, Mercedes-Benz eCitaro G, Ebusco 2.2, VDL Citea SLF120 Electric, SLFA180 Electric and SLFA181 Electric, Heuliez GX437 Electric, Van Hool A330 Fuel Cell, Van Hool TD27 Astromega, and Setra S419UL. The two Ebusco 2.1 and two Van Hool A330FC are out of service.

In 2024 an experiment for autonomous driving began with bus 3324 in a project called Robitoner. The bus was presented at Innotrans in Berlin in September 2024 but initial tests have not been convincing.

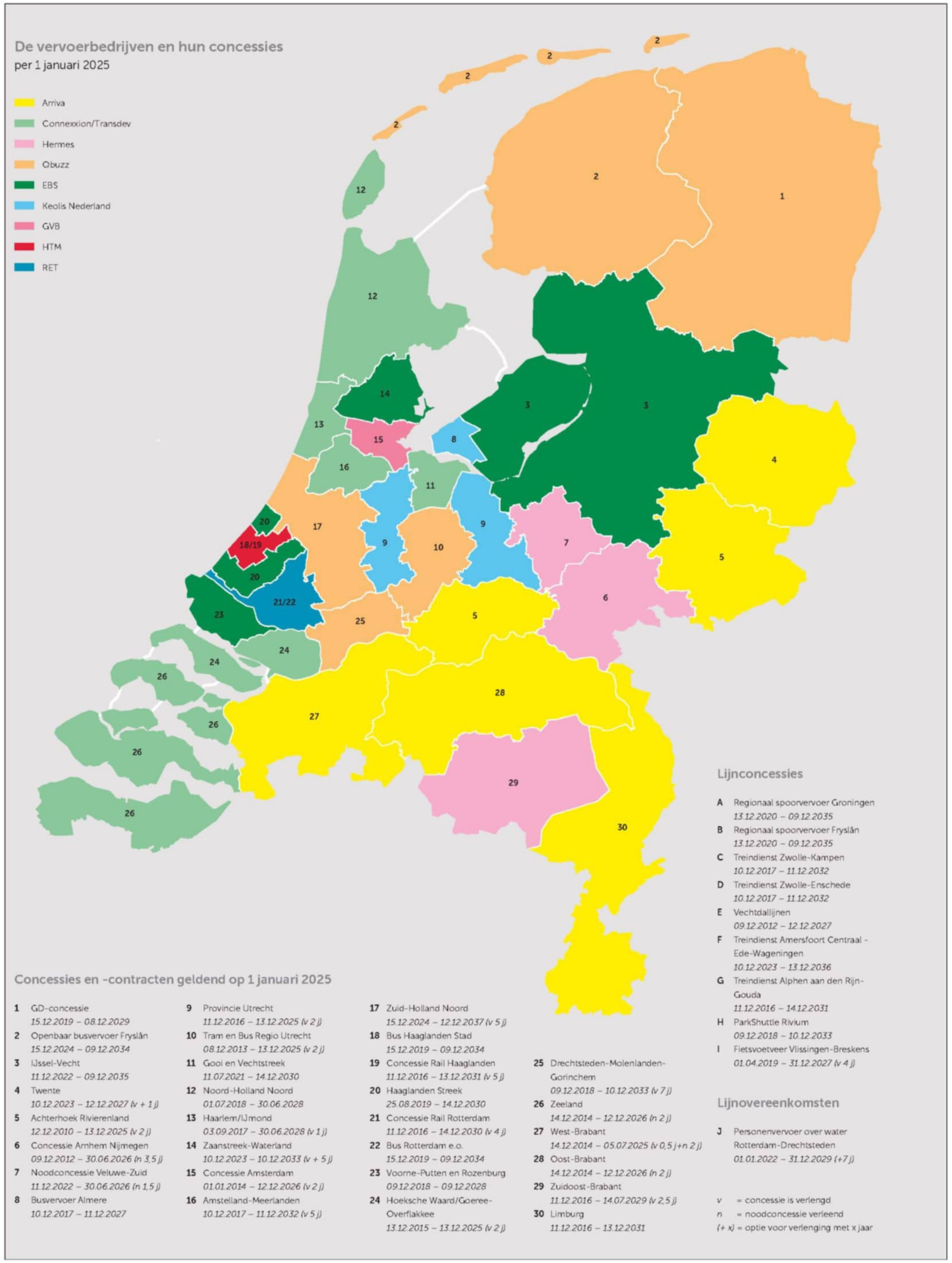
Concession Zuid-Holland Noord (ZHN)

Arriva operated this concession since December 2012. The fleet consisted of VDL Citea LLE120 series 8700-8827 (incomplete), short VDL Ambassador 8851-8860, Volvo 7900 series 7701-7760, 7763-7766, 7771-7777 and 7781-7786 and Volvo 7900LH Electric 4801-4823. At the end of the concession, electric buses 4801-4823 carried on with successor Qbuzz as they had been bought by the province, buses 7701-7760 and 7771-7777 (all Euro 5-EEV) were immediately transferred to Arriva Croatia (minus a withdrawn one), and 7763-7766 and 7781-7786 (Euro 6) were transferred to Arriva Brabant. The Citeas and Ambassadors went out of service and will be sold by trader Womy. The first batch left for Cuba in February 2025. Arriva refused to rent any buses to successor Qbuzz, in spite of the huge problems with bus deliveries it had. Only after a lot of pressure, Arriva permitted Qbuzz to use 40 VDL Citea for a short period of time. Having over 100 buses standing in storage while the new concession holder has a shortage of 100 buses did not go over very well and would tarnish Arriva's public image.

Qbuzz took over on December 2024. It had ordered 112 Van Hool A electric buses of 13,5 and 15 meters for the snelBuzz (express services) and Rnet (high quality services), 102 IVECO Crossway LE ELEC for regional services (series 8201-8302, streekBuzz), 15 IVECO-Heuliez E-Way 10.7 meter narrow buses for city services in Gouda and Alphen aan den Rijn (series 8001-8015) and 23 IVECO-Heuliez E-Way 12-meter buses for Leiden city services (series 8051-8073). The existing 23 Volvo 7900LH Electric buses taken over from Arriva became 8100-8122 and received regional buses (streekBuzz) livery.

When it became clear that the Van Hool buses would not come, Qbuzz ordered 50 Yutong U15 buses from China. These were all delivered in time, are in Rnet-livery and are numbered 8701-8750. Qbuzz was not allowed to order more Yutong buses immediately by the province but should rather test the first 50 before ordering more. The same responsible civil servant who denied the full Yutong order now threatens Qbuzz with fines because of the shortage of buses.

Qbuzz needed to replace the other 62 buses of the Van Hool order. Relatively new Euro 6 VDL Citea LLE120 buses were bought secondhand from Kynnisferðir in Reykjavik, Iceland, and from BVG, Berlin, Germany. Kynnisferðir had a batch of 30 Citeas dating from 2016, series 301-330. Two had been withdrawn (306 and 329). The remaining 28 were transferred to the Netherlands in batches of four on ferries from Iceland. The last ones only arrived quite late, but all were adapted: new colors (wrapped), new seat upholstery, communication equipment, and so forth. One entered



Concessies en -contracten geldend op 1 januari 2025

1 GD-concessie
15.12.2019 – 08.12.2029
2 Openbaar busvervoer Fryslân
15.12.2024 – 09.12.2034
3 IJssel-Vecht
11.12.2022 – 09.12.2035
4 Twente
10.12.2023 – 12.12.2027 (v + 1 j)
5 Achterhoek Rivierenland
12.12.2010 – 13.12.2025 (v 2 j)
6 Concessie Arnhem Nijmegen
09.12.2012 – 30.06.2026 (n 3,5 j)
7 Noodconcessie Veluwe-Zuid
11.12.2022 – 30.06.2026 (n 1,5 j)
8 Busvervoer Almere
10.12.2017 – 11.12.2027
9 Provincie Utrecht
11.12.2016 – 13.12.2025 (v 2 j)
10 Tram en Bus Regio Utrecht
08.12.2013 – 13.12.2025 (v 2 j)
11 Gooi en Vechtstreek
11.07.2021 – 14.12.2030
12 Noord-Holland Noord
01.07.2018 – 30.06.2028
13 Haarlem/IJmond
03.09.2017 – 30.06.2028 (v 1 j)
14 Zaanstreek-Waterland
10.12.2023 – 10.12.2033 (v + 5 j)
15 Concessie Amsterdam
01.01.2014 – 12.12.2026 (v 2 j)
16 Amstelland-Meerlanden
10.12.2017 – 11.12.2032 (v 5 j)
17 Zuid-Holland Noord
15.12.2024 – 12.12.2037 (v 5 j)
18 Bus Haaglanden Stad
15.12.2019 – 09.12.2034
19 Concessie Rail Haaglanden
11.12.2016 – 13.12.2031 (v 5 j)
20 Haaglanden Streek
25.08.2019 – 14.12.2030
21 Concessie Rail Rotterdam
11.12.2016 – 14.12.2030 (v 4 j)
22 Bus Rotterdam e.o.
15.12.2019 – 09.12.2034
23 Voorne-Putten en Rozenburg
09.12.2018 – 09.12.2028
24 Hoeksche Waard/Goeree-Overflakkee
13.12.2015 – 13.12.2025 (v 2 j)
25 Drechtsteden-Molenlanden-Gorinchem
09.12.2018 – 10.12.2033 (v 7 j)
26 Zeeland
14.12.2014 – 12.12.2026 (n 2 j)
27 West-Brabant
14.12.2014 – 05.07.2025 (v 0,5 j+n 2 j)
28 Oost-Brabant
14.12.2014 – 12.12.2026 (n 2 j)
29 Zuidoost-Brabant
11.12.2016 – 14.07.2029 (v 2,5 j)
30 Limburg
11.12.2016 – 13.12.2031

Lijnconcessies

A Regionaal spoorvervoer Groningen
13.12.2020 – 09.12.2035
B Regionaal spoorvervoer Fryslân
13.12.2020 – 09.12.2035
C Treindienst Zwolle-Kampen
10.12.2017 – 11.12.2032
D Treindienst Zwolle-Enschede
10.12.2017 – 11.12.2032
E Vechtdallijnen
09.12.2012 – 12.12.2027
F Treindienst Amersfoort Centraal - Ede-Wageningen
10.12.2023 – 13.12.2036
G Treindienst Alphen aan den Rijn-Gouda
11.12.2016 – 14.12.2031
H ParkShuttle Rivium
09.12.2018 – 10.12.2033
I Fietsvoetveer Vlissingen-Breskens
01.04.2019 – 31.12.2027 (v 4 j)

Lijnovereenkomsten

J Personenvervoer over water Rotterdam-Drechtsteden
01.01.2022 – 31.12.2029 (+7 j)

v = concessie is verlengd
n = noodconcessie verleend
(+ x) = optie voor verlenging met x jaar

ABOVE: A map showing the Dutch bus concessions and who is operating them - key top left - as from 1st january this year.
At the bottom it gives the name of the concession and its start and end date.
The Lijnconcessies listed on the right-hand side refers to the rail concessions which are not shown.(KpVV Crow)

service only in February 2025 as it needed a new gearbox. There was some confusion on the colours. Finally, 8123-8125, 8128, 8130 and 8131 received red-grey Rnet-colours, 8126 became streekBuzz green-grey and the remainder of the series 8123-8150 received the blue-grey snelBuzz livery. The Iceland buses are somewhat special as they have the rare three-door configuration.

The ex-Berlin buses arrived very slowly in the Netherlands and even in February 2025 not all were freed by BVG. Apparently, BVG has problems separating itself from the buses that initially received quite some criticism from drivers. The Berlin series consisted of 110 vehicles, numbered 2325-2434, built in 2015. The ex-Berlin vehicles received the green-grey streekBuzz livery and numbering started with 8151. Only 22 buses, up to number 8172, were (more or less) ready at the start of the concession on December 15, 2024.

As another emergency measure twelve Volvo B5LH 7900 Hybrid, built in 2014, were bought last minute from Vy Olso in Norway. These buses were unfortunately in a rather bad shape, but were rushed into service. They are numbered 8351-8362.

When it became clear that IVECO would not be able to deliver the new buses on time, panic struck. The secondhand buses, not all of them ready, were rushed into service. They were registered but in the confusion registration plates were attached to the wrong vehicles and in addition eight vehicles carried the same registration plates two by two. Of course, that drew attention from the police (especially as personnel were seen changing plates in public) and several buses were impounded. Also, a Volvo was waiting for a replacement window. That had been replaced by a wooden board just hammered in with a large nail sticking out into the interior. Of course, someone put that on social media…. The bus should not have been in service.

And as IVECO only had delivered some 45 buses out of 140 ordered, Qbuzz was confronted with a shortage of over 100 buses at the start of the concession. As it had no surplus buses in other concessions and Arriva bluntly refused to help out, Qbuzz contracted any private vehicle it could get. That led to a large variety of old buses and some newer coaches. With drivers who were not familiar with routes, no destination displays and no communication equipment, so traffic control had no idea where buses were, if schedules were adhered to, if there were delays. The result was a complete mess, with large numbers of services cancelled or just not showing up and no information available. Crying passengers, some waiting for two hours for what would be a 15-minute service, and crying bus drivers were the result, as well as an extremely bad press and an angry concession grantor.

After Christmas, during the holidays, things improved somewhat as buses from Utrecht and DMG (Dordrecht) concessions could be used until January 5, while new buses slowly entered service. The buses still rented were from companies that are experienced subcontractors (Pouw, BusiNext, Jan de Wit, Oostenrijk). But January still saw a high percentage of cancelled services.

Other problems still need to be solved. In Katwijk, a new depot was built for the Leiden area. But insurance was denied for charging the electric buses inside, so the premises need to be adapted. In Alphen aan den Rijn a depot area is used without the necessary permits already given though the municipality tolerates the use pending the permission process. But electric buses there are charged now with a diesel generator. In Gouda, the charging station still must be built pending permission by the municipality. Buses charge in Krimpen aan den Ijssel, which means a loss of time and unnecessary mileage.

At least the problems in ZHN, and the ones in other concession transfers, have finally led to a discussion on the way concession changes are done, especially with the introduction of electric vehicles. Already the challenge of starting a new concession overnight with new schedules, several hundred new buses, partly new personnel (as not all drivers choose to transfer to the new company), different communication equipment, is huge and led to problems. And this is done at the beginning of December, a busy season with often bad weather and short daytime light. The reason for this is that train schedules in Europe change then and possibly bus schedule changes need to be adapted again if concessions start at another moment. But then introducing in addition a full fleet of electric buses and making the new concession holder responsible for depots and charging installations simply does not work.

The time given is mostly less than a year. Contracts need to be negotiated, permits need to be obtained. All time-consuming processes. Also, network congestion means that sometimes the electricity is simply not available. Interestingly, bus operators know this, but will still offer as if everything will be OK, as they fear to loose the tender process if they do not fulfill the requirements.

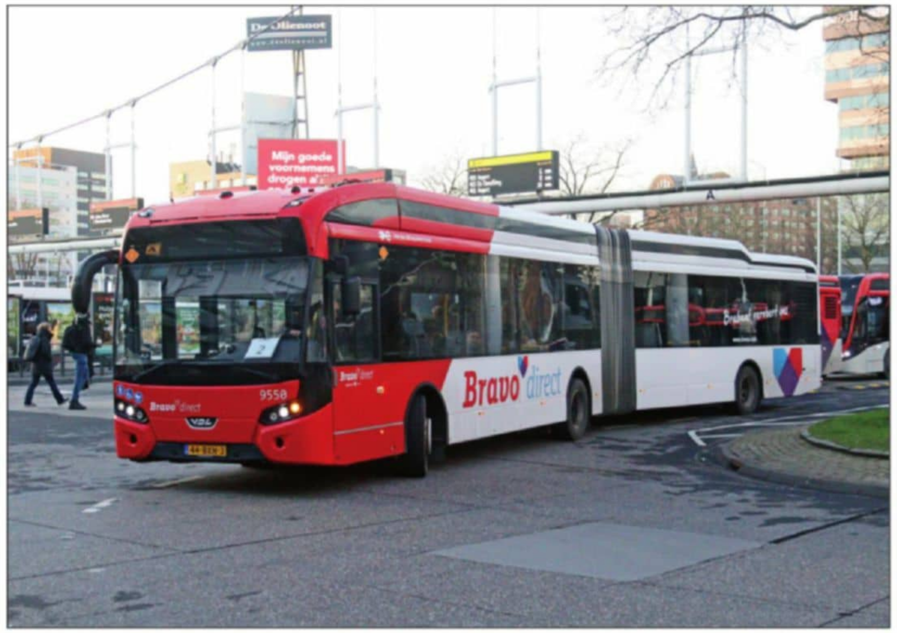
Several new concessions will now start in the summer (Brabant West, Arnhem-Nijmegen). A staggered approach to the introduction of electric vehicles is used in several regions (Zuidoost Brabant, Friesland), and concession grantors (most often the province) are considering to become the owner of depots and charging installations.

Another point that became clear is that supply chain problems in Europe led to delays in bus deliveries. While Van Hool went bankrupt, neither VDL, Ebusco, IVECO nor Mercedes were capable of delivering their vehicles within the agreed timeframe. But Yutong managed to supply its 50 buses ordered by Qbuzz just some five months before the start of the concession on time and sent a staff of Chinese personnel to make sure the buses were ready to go. That makes European suppliers rightfully worried about their future. An aspect that does not favor the smaller producers is that the tendering processes require a new fleet every, say, 10 years, rather than a continuous replacement of some 10% of the fleet on an annual basis. Responding to a tender for 30 buses and delivering on time is much easier than responding to a 300 buses tender.

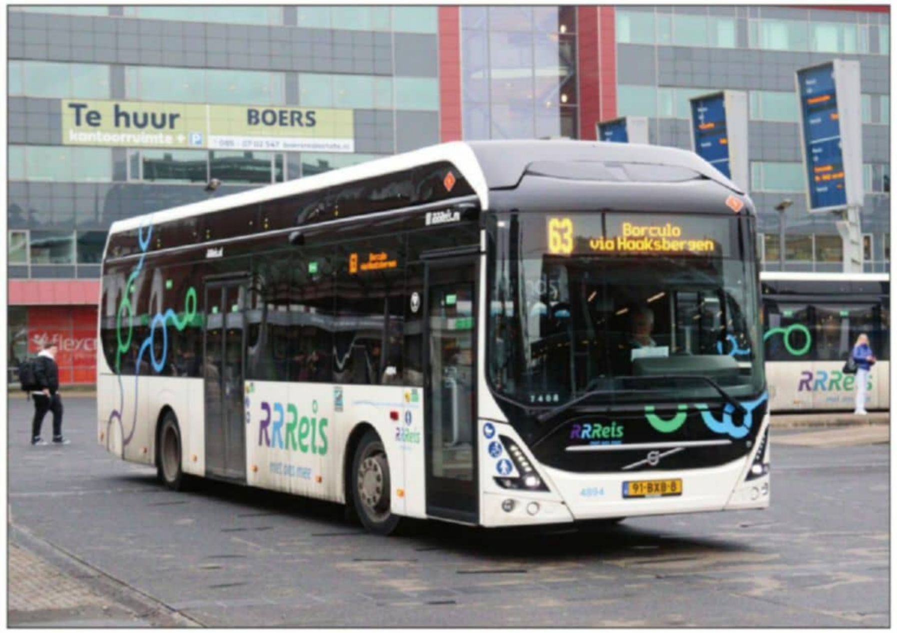
Concession Fryslan (Friesland)

This concession encompasses the whole of Friesland province and all the Wadden Islands except for Texel. Arriva started in this region in 1999 and considered it its homeland, so was extremely disappointed when it lost the tender to Qbuzz. It started several court cases but lost them all. Qbuzz took over on 15 December 2024. In 2022 the two Friesland concessions, both operated by Arriva, were joined to make one province-wide concession, in preparation for the new tender. The two fleets were combined but retained their separate liveries.

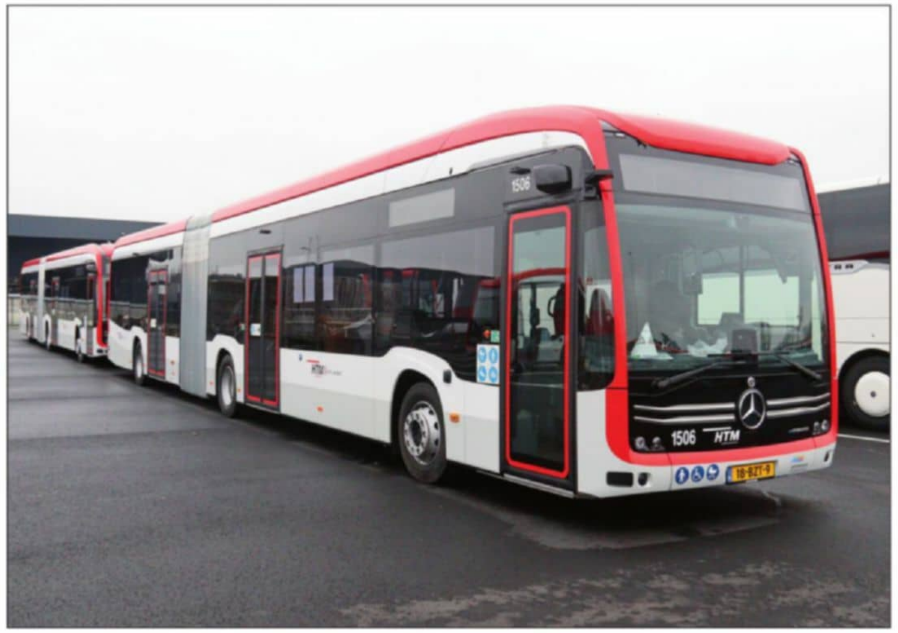
The fleet last operated by Arriva Friesland North-Southwest plus Schiermonnikoog consisted of VDL Citea LLE 120 buses series 8501-8609 (incomplete) of 2012, VDL Ambassador ALE105 buses 8660-8670, one long VDL Citea XLE 145 number 8691, six electric VDL Citea SLFA180 Electric 8621-8626, and six BYD Ebus 12 3001-3006 on Schiermonnikoog, all in a blue-white livery. For Qliner-services there were dark blue Mercedes-Benz Intouro M buses 7501-7519 and 7530-7531. All these buses are set to be



RIGHT: To compensate for the late delivery of its buses, VDL provided 18 ex Unibus, Oslo VDL Citea SLFA180 electric buses of 2019 which had been traded in to Hermes. They should have entered service in August 2024 but technical problems delayed their arrival. Number 9550, ex Unibus 3120, is seen leaving Eindhoven's bus station on 13th January 2025.



LEFT: Arriva ordered 104 new Volvo electric buses for the Twente concession, which they took over from Syntus in December 2023. They are in the rather uninspiring RRReis (reis=travel) livery mandated for all services in Overijssel, Flevoland (except Almere) and Gelderland provinces. At concession changes over the next few years the livery will be applied to all buses. Volvo 4894 is at Enschede central bus station on 22nd January 2025.



RIGHT: It took some time but the new Mercedes-Benz eCitaro and eCitaro G buses for HTM in The Hague are finally arriving. The articulated buses are numbered in series 1500 and two can be seen being readied at the Daimler premises in Nijkerk on 20th February 2025.

sold, except for the electric buses 3001-3006 and 8621-8626, which had to be transferred to Qbuzz.

For the Friesland South-East part plus the other three Wadden islands there was a more recent fleet in a light blue livery. VDL Citea LLE120 series 9201-9248 of 2016 and Mercedes-Benz Intouro L 7534, 7541-7547, 7551-7552 of 2014-2017 were all diesel buses. On the islands Vlieland, Terschelling and Ameland, electric buses were used: VDL Citea SLF120 Electric 3011-3020, SLFA180 Electric 3031-3034 and SLFA181 Electric 3041-3042. The latter two buses had been acquired in 2021 for a new concession from Lelystad Central Station to Lelystad Airport when the intention was that Lelystad Airport would become a major passenger airport to reduce the pressure on Schiphol Airport. That plan was abandoned and the two buses ended up on the islands.

This fleet, all Euro 6 or electric is to be assigned to other concessions. The electric buses will go to Maastricht and Heerlen in Limburg, the Mercedes Intouro L are assigned to Arriva Touring and the VDL Citea are currently used to replace temporary shortages in the Twente, Brabant, Limburg and Achterhoek concessions but are set to replace older non-Euro 6 vehicles in the Achterhoek.

Qbuzz thus took over. Initially, the province wanted a fleet of electric buses. However, during a meeting between the province, bus operators and the electricity company it became clear that the network would currently not be able to accommodate 200 electric buses. So, the province decided to allow diesel buses to start the concession, later changing to electric. Only the islands would remain electric.

Qbuzz ordered 54 IVECO Crossway LE 11-meter buses (1001-1054), 108 IVECO Crossway LE 12-meter buses (1401-1508), all in a new yellow-blue livery, and 37 IVECO Crossway Pro buses for Qliner services in a blue livery. Small buses were also ordered: 17 Altas Cityline (1901-1917) and eleven MAN TGE -Tribus minibuses for neighborhood services (1921-1931). In addition, some buses were transferred from the Groningen-Drenthe concession: four Mercedes-Benz Integro L2 (3660/7/8/73) and eleven Setra S419UL (7607/09/11-19), all in blue Qliner colours. Six articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro C G2 of 2016 also came from the GD-concession and received the yellow colours.

Electric buses for the islands are ex Arriva BYD Ebus 12 numbers 1151-1156 (ex Arriva 3001-3006) for Schiermonnikoog, three ex Connexxion BYD K9 numbers 1075-1077 for Vlieland, six VDL Citea SLFA180 numbers 1301-1306 (ex Arriva 8621-8626) for Terschelling and Ameland, and four VDL SLF120 Electric numbers 7029-7032 transferred from the GD concession for Terschelling. All the electric buses will receive the yellow livery.

In November 2024 it became clear that the IVECO factory in the Czech Republic would not be able to deliver the buses in time. By 31 December 2024 all buses were officially registered with Qbuzz but many could not be used. Lacking mirrors, displays, communication equipment and sloppy finishing (leaking roofs, for example, seats and panels coming loose) meant buses could not be used. Adaptations and repairs are still being carried out in February 2025, though most buses are now in service. At the start, private coaches had to be rented and many services were cancelled. Though by no means the problems were as bad as in Zuid-Holland Noord, there still was a lot of criticism and discussion. The bad relationship between Arriva and Qbuzz also played here when Arriva refused to rent depot areas, even when those were available. On Ameland, Arriva removed the charging equipment, stating they could use it elsewhere, forcing Qbuzz to install new equipment. All this has led the province to decide that in future it will become the owner of depots and charging installations.

Concession Limburg

Arriva operates this concession since 2009, including local rail services. A large part of the fleet consists of VDL electric buses. A repair shop fire destroyed three electric buses in August 2024. They were replaced by old diesel buses from the Arriva reserve fleet. At the beginning of 2025 the electric buses freed in the Friesland concession will be transferred to Heerlen and Maastricht. There are two major subcontractors, Kupers around Weert and BusiNext in Southern Limburg. Service expansion led to both companies extending their fleet by adding VDL Citea LLE buses that previously were operated by EBS in Zaandam and which originated with BVG, Berlin.

Concession South-East Brabant

Connexxion subsidiary Hermes operates this concession which is centered on Eindhoven and Helmond. Buses carry the "Bravo" livery mandated by the Brabant province. Bravo stands for Brabant Vervoert Ons (Brabant Transports Us). The Eindhoven area is the high-tech area of the Netherlands, with companies such as Philips, ASML and DAF. Helmond has an Automotive Campus. The area became a pioneer in the use of innovative buses with the introduction of the (failed) Phileas buses in 2004. More successful are the 43 articulated VDL Citea SLFA181 electric buses introduced in 2016.

The concession period was extended from 2026 to 2029. It will end in the summer to avoid the recent problems encountered with the change of operator in December. More electric buses will be introduced but in various steps, also taking into consideration network congestion in the region.

Hermes had ordered 32 VLD New Citea LF112 Electric buses for urban services in Eindhoven, series 2151-2182, which, with delays, entered service by the end of 2023. An order for 32 regional VDL New Citea LE122 Electric buses, series 2222-2253, was delayed and only around half of the series was in service by the end of 2024. The regional buses are Low-Entry and have two doors, the urban LF122 is Low-Floor and has three doors.

As electrification of the fleet in urban Eindhoven was required, VDL offered 18 ex Oslo VDL Citea SLFA180 Electric buses of 2019 that had been traded in. They should have entered service before September 2024 but there were technical problems, and the first buses only entered service by December 2024. The series is 9543-9560. All old MAN Lion's City and VDL Ambassador buses are now gone. They were also partly replaced in December 2023 by 20 Euro 6 IVECO Crossway LE, numbers 5519-5538 that were surplus in the Transdev fleet when it withdrew from the IJsselmond concession.

Concession Zeeland

Zeeland, with its many islands and peninsulas linked by dams, bridges and tunnels, with a rather sparse population, rather small cities but a large number of summer tourists, presents special challenges. The province wants to change the public transport system and introduce a Flex System with minibuses, reducing the number of fixed routes with large buses. But a tender for the new concession that should have started in 2024, attracted no offers, also not from the current operator Connexxion. The current contract was extended with two years and a new tender has been issued.

63
Qbuzz
1045
IVECO

RIGHT: Qbuzz Fryslân was allowed to start the new concession in December 2024 with a fleet of diesel buses. 199 Iveco Crossway were ordered. Number 1045, seen in Dokkum on 24th February 2025, belongs to series 1001-1054, 11-meter Iveco Crossway LE.

LEFT: The island of Vlieland has a small bus service connecting to the ferry from Harlingen. Normally one bus is sufficient but during the summer two, or even three, are needed. Qbuzz Fryslân bought three small BYD K7 buses built in 2018 that Connexxion had retired as they did not do well on the Alkmaar city services with cobble-stone narrow streets. Qbuzz numbered them 1075-1077. Number 1076 is seen at the Posthuys terminus on the western part of the island on 25th February 2025. It is not clear whether they will receive the Qbuzz yellow livery or whether they will be replaced by other buses.

350 QBUZZ
Q=liner
3668
18-BFD-9

RIGHT: Transferred from the Qbuzz Groningen-Drenthe concession to Qbuzz Fryslân are four older (2014) Mercedes-Benz Integro L2 buses in Qliner-livery, numbers 3660, 3567, 3668 and 3673. This is 3668 in Leeuwarden bus station on 24th February 2025.

Only Arriva and EBS show interest. In the meantime, a new livery with the new slogan "Reizen door Zeeland" (Traveling through Zeeland) is to replace the current "Door Zeeland" livery. Connexxion is to phase out the use of the MAN Lion's City CNG buses, though the deadline of 1 January 2025 was extended. The main reason is that filling stations are being closed as they near the end of their operational licences. Connexxion has been transferring fairly new Euro 6 buses from the lost IJsselmond (Kampen, Emmeloord) concession. The existing fleet consists of 16 remaining MAN Lion's City CNG buses series 2956-2987 of 2008, five remaining MAN Lion's City G CNG buses series 9264-9274 of 2008, 48 buses of series 5540-5588, IVECO Crossway LE of 2015 and the three buses of series 5590-5592 IVECO Crossway Pro of 2015. Added in 2024 are ten Volvo B7R 8700 of 2008, series 5739-5748, six VDL Citea XLE145 of 2014, numbers 4312-4317, one VDL Citea XLE137 of 2011 and two Mercedes-Benz O530G Citaro articulated buses of 2008, number 9256 and 9262. Evidently, Connexxion is not going to make major investments anymore.

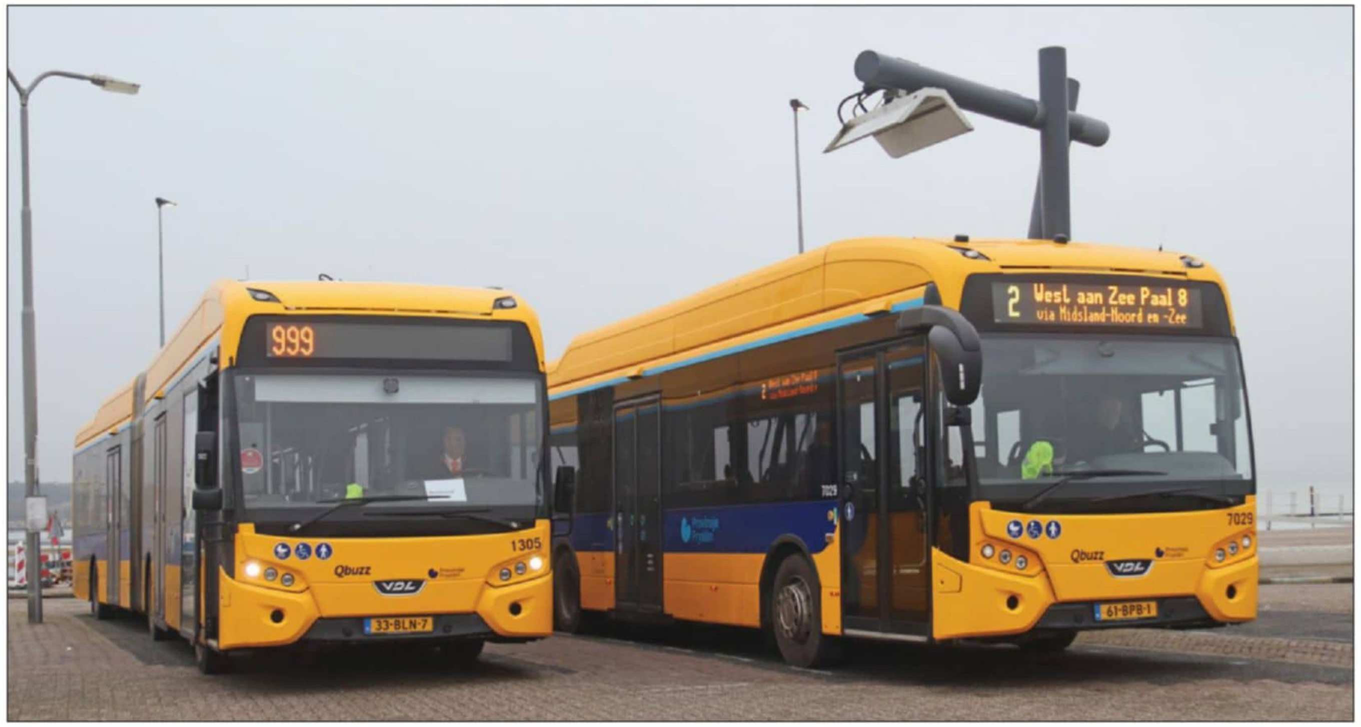
Concession Zaandam-Waterland

The area north of Amsterdam, with the cities of Zaandam, Purmerend and Volendam, was tendered as one area, joining the previous concessions of Zaanstreek (with Zaandam) and Waterland (with Purmerend). Zaandam was operated by Connexxion, Waterland by EBS. EBS won the new concession, which started in December 2023. EBS ordered 193 VDL New Citea electric buses: 4201-4260 LE122 of 12.2 meters in the new blue "Mnet" livery, 4301-4396 LE135 of 13.5 meters in the red-grey Rnet-livery and 4401-4437 of 13.5 meters in the blue Mnet livery. Also, eight electric VDL Midcity buses were bought, numbers 9101-9108 which were built in 2018 for Connexxion as part of a large order that was cancelled. Seven neighbourhood buses completed the planned fleet.

However, at the start of the concession, none of the VDL buses was available. And if they would have been available, they wouldn't have been of much use as the charging installations in Purmerend and Zaandam were not ready. For the Waterland part of the concession, which was already operated by EBS, the existing Scania fleet dating from 2011 could be used. There are also ten VDL Citea SLFA181 electric buses of 2018, but as those have different charging systems they were quickly put aside. Negotiations are currently (beginning of 2025) under way with Connexxion, who could use them around Schiphol where they have similar vehicles.

As an emergency measure, EBS rented 25 VDL Ambassador buses from the existing Connexxion fleet in Zaandam, which they numbered 4130-4154, and obtained 24 ex BVG, Berlin, VDL Citea LLE120, built in 2017 that BVG had returned to VDL at the end of their lease contract. They were put into service almost "as is" in their yellow Berlin livery and with German texts inside, which drew a lot of criticism. Also, the Connexxion buses, dating from 2010, were completely worn out. As the new VDL buses finally started arriving, the Connexxion buses were the first to go, with most leaving around May 2024. The ex-Berlin buses lasted longer, with the last ones leaving in November 2024.

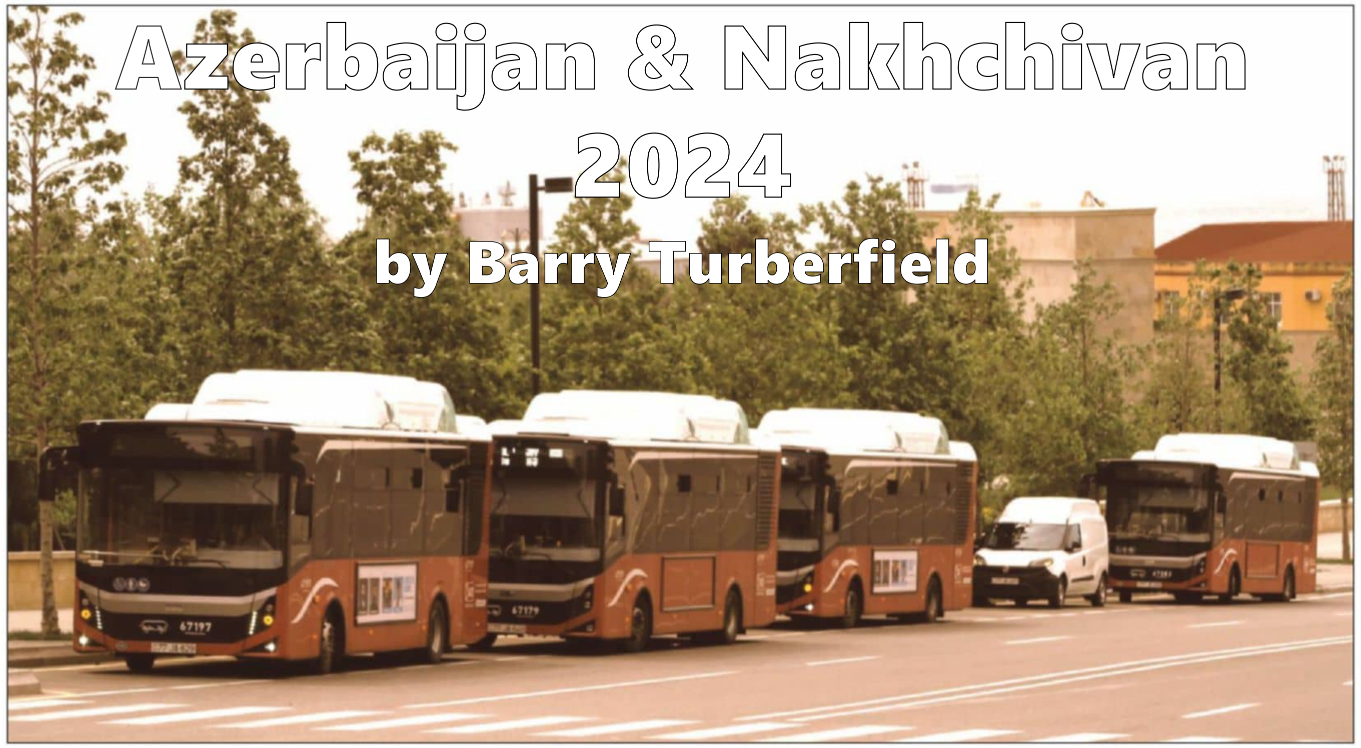
At the beginning of 2025, eight new VDL buses still have to be delivered. And EBS noted that repairs of damage to the buses, which unfortunately is common, takes more time than with older buses, because of the carbon fibre construction. Permission was received to (temporarily) assign eight short BYD K7 buses from the Ijssel-Vecht concession to Zaanstreek-Waterland. Because of their limited range they are used on the two city circle lines in Purmerend, currently (February 2025) in their Ijssel-Vecht livery, though EBS promised to wrap them Mnet-blue before the summer. Still, 26 Scania buses, among which two articulated ones, were used in February 2025. EBS seems to have problems to say goodbye to their Scania fleet: dozens of vehicles that have been out of service for a long time and many of which are damaged, are still sitting at the old depot in Purmerend.



ABOVE: On the islands of Terschelling and Ameland, Qbuzz Fryslân uses VDL Citea electric buses. On Terschelling, there are four VDL Citea SLF120 Electric buses numbered 7029-7032, ex Qbuzz Groningen-Drenthe, and two articulated VDL Citea SLFA180 Electric buses numbered 1305 and 1306. The latter are ex-Arriva and were used on Leeuwarden city services. Ameland has articulated buses 1301-1304. Numbers 1305 and 3029 are seen waiting for passengers at the ferry harbor on Terschelling on 25th February 2025. They cannot use the charging equipment as Arriva has disconnected it. A temporary charging utility has been set up by Qbuzz but requires additional time and unnecessary kilometres.

Azerbaijan & Nakhchivan 2024

by Barry Turberfield



ABOVE: BakuBus MMC 67197 (77·JA·829) heads a line-up of four out of a total of 205 currently operational BMC Neocity 9M CNGs, new in 2022. The buses are lined-up at the Nizami Ganjavi Park terminus of route 10. Route 10 is a convoluted route east/west through the city centre, the western terminus being at the Zefir Shopping Mall. (All photos by the author)

The Republic of Azerbaijan sits on the borders of Europe and Asia with a coastline on the Caspian Sea; land borders with the Republic of Dagestan, Iran, Georgia and Armenia; has the enclave of Nakhchivan. With a population of 10.2 million the capital is Baku, main language is Turkic and the currency is the manat (1 manat = 47p). This former part of the Soviet Union is now a 'democratically elected one party state', rich in gas and oil reserves.

The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic is a land locked nation situated in the southwest end of the Lesser Caucasus and covers an area of 5,500 KM² with a population of 444,400. It has a 246km long border with Armenia; 204km with Iran and 11km with Turkey. Since the second Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020 and the 2023 Azerbaijani offensive, the Republic is only accessible to foreigners by air. Biblically, Nakhchivan is said to be the resting place of the Prophet Noah and that the cleft peak of Mount Ilandag was carved out by Noah's Ark. The Republic is also considered one of the least polluted countries in the world, with no major industries and vast areas given over to mountains and national parks.

The capital of Azerbaijan, Baku, has a population of 2.62 million. The terrain is hilly, levelling out on the seafront with a 14km long promenade. The streets are often narrow, and the architecture is a mix of ancient, Soviet and spectacular modern. Public transport includes a two-line metro system, 70 city bus routes, 124 suburban routes, 6 minibus routes in the city and 17 in the suburbs; carries 350,000 passengers daily and is overseen by Baku Transport Agency (BTA). Tickets are purchased using the 'BakkaKART', a pre-loaded smart card. The municipal operator is BakuBus MMC with two bus garages, each has a capacity of 300 buses. Two large independents, Cinar Trans LLC and Khaliq Faiqoglu (part of the SAFA Holding group of companies) plus 41 small operators contribute about 2,168 buses to the network, with the minibuses, normally white, accepting only cash (0.30 manat in the city), payable before alighting. Passenger loadings are always heavy with services suffering from day long traffic congestion, and most routes continue to midnight and beyond.

Baku's public transport has seen huge investment and between 2015 and 2020, 603 medium and large-capacity buses were purchased, these included 300 buses bought in 2019. In 2020 115 Turkish built BMC buses were ordered, 80 were 12-meter long and 35 9-meter-long BMC Neocity. As a result of the Clean Bus Declaration (BUS2025), one BYD 12-meter electric bus was purchased in 2023. A second electric bus from China's ZhongTong Bus was purchased in 2024. Recently the Economy Ministry has signed an agreement with BYD to assemble vehicles locally. Major purchases have also been made by the two large independents, Cinar Trans LLC has invested in 150 new vehicles since 2017 and Khaliq Faiqoglu, who operate 300 buses (the blue buses in Baku) have received Otokar or Isuzu types for their city routes 18, 52, 61, 65, 79, 85, 96, 135 and 199.

Ganja is Azerbaijan's second largest city (population 335,600) and owes much of its history to being on the original silk road. The city saw bombing by Armenian forces during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Between 1955 and 2004 the city had an extensive trolleybus network. Today most routes are operated by mini and midibuses of various ages and from several manufacturers. Information on the network is limited, although ten routes were observed.

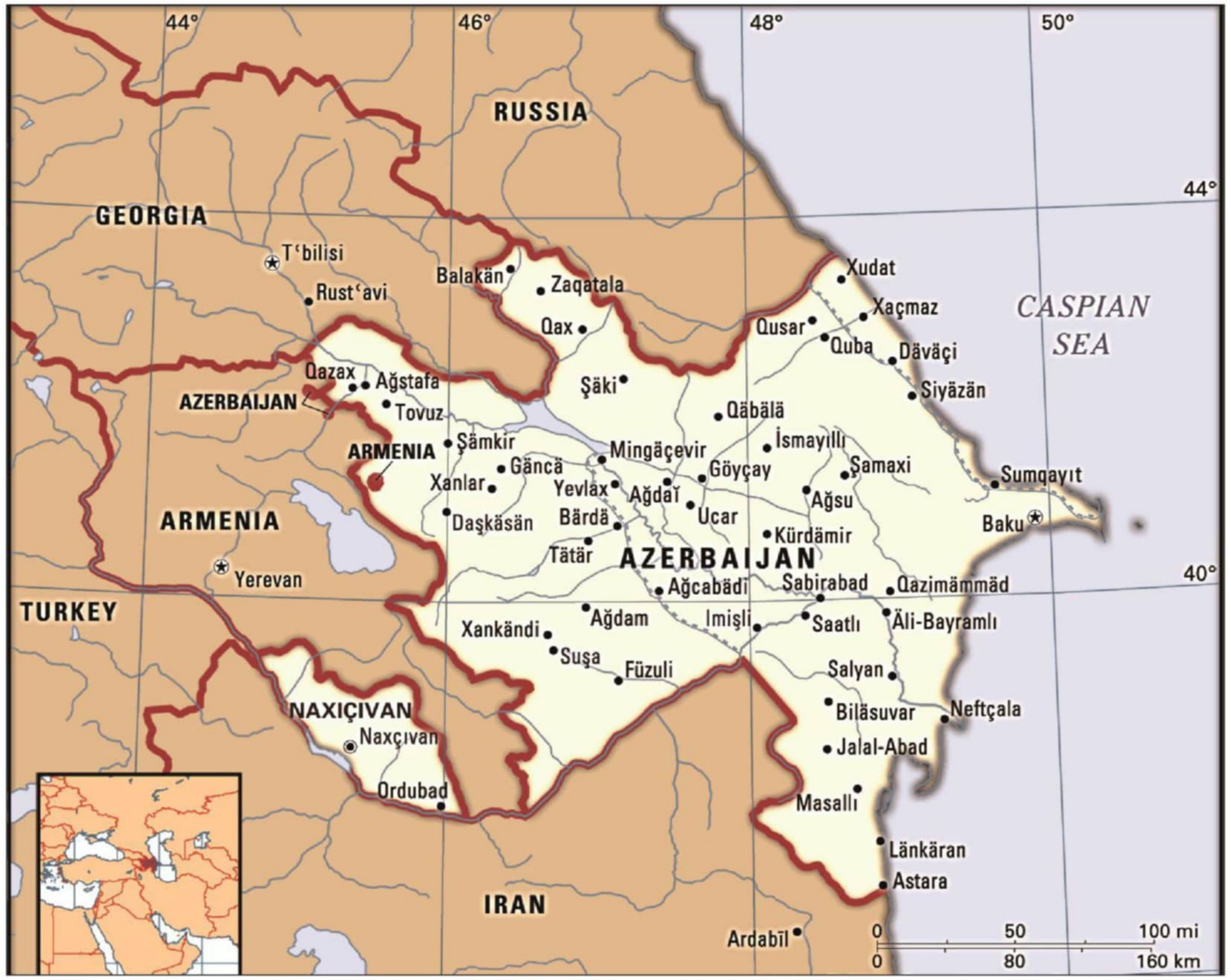
Sheki is a small city on the slopes of the Greater Caucasus Mountains (population 68,460). There are 16 bus routes operated by minibuses (Marshrutkas) primarily of Mercedes Benz manufacture, the vast majority Mercedes 208D's with the occasional 507D. Despite their age, these vehicles manage the hilly terrain with gusto: routes 11 and 17 climb to The Palace of the Sheki Khans situated at 800m above sea level, fully laden with passengers, showing little sign of their age.

Nakhchivan City (population 94,500) is the administrative centre for the Autonomous Republic. A small walkable city with wide boulevards, a result of Soviet planning, that provide a one-way system for the bus network. Until 2004 there was a trolleybus system consisting of three routes. Today the city buses are mostly Isuzu and King Long midibuses whilst suburban buses are fleets of Mercedes 208D/408D’s. The main bus station is in the north of the city at the junction of Dilgam Pishavari Road and the M7, whilst the out-of-town minibuses congregate around the central market in the south of the city.

Ordubad is the second largest city in Nakhchivan, built on a hillside close to the Iranian border and is a mixture of modern and medieval architecture. The local bus service travels up Emin Sadliq Road, with the primary objective to get residents up the steep hill from the bottom of town using Mercedes 208D/408D’s.

Throughout the visit it was difficult to identify coach operators as most vehicles carried no signwriting. They were however quite modern vehicles. The current favoured large vehicle type is the Neoplan Cityliner, whilst slightly older vehicles mainly consist of Mercedes Benz Travelgo’s. New midi-coaches are TEMSA and all smaller coaches Mercedes Benz Sprinters.

Azerbaijan is investing heavily in transport infrastructure. The recent agreement between the country and its neighbour Armenia to open a transit corridor between the two parts of Azerbaijan will see both road and rail links established. The investment in buses seen in Baku might spread to the hinterland. For now Azerbaijan remains a hidden treasure.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ABOVE: A map showing the position of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)
BELOW: TheAzerbaijan flag. (Wikipedia)

RIGHT: BakuBus MMC 15599 (99·JU·284). BMC Procity 12 CNG, new in 2019. One of 510 in service with the operator. Operating service 125 from 28 May metro station to the southern suburb of Lokbatan, a distance of 21km with a 10-minute headway. Photographed on Neftchilar Avenue heading out of the city.

LEFT: BakuBus MMC 15406 (99·JB·291). BMC Procity 18 CNG, new in February 2020 and one of 20 in service. Photographed passing the architecturally amazing Heydar Aliyev Centre on route 13 towards the large park & ride/interchange site Mezhdunarodnyy avtovokzal.

RIGHT: Faiqoğlu 1044 (99·JM·354), Anadolu Isuzu Citiport 12, new in 2016 and one of 55 in service. The bus is arriving at the Yaşıl Bazar terminus on Khatai Avenue, Baku.

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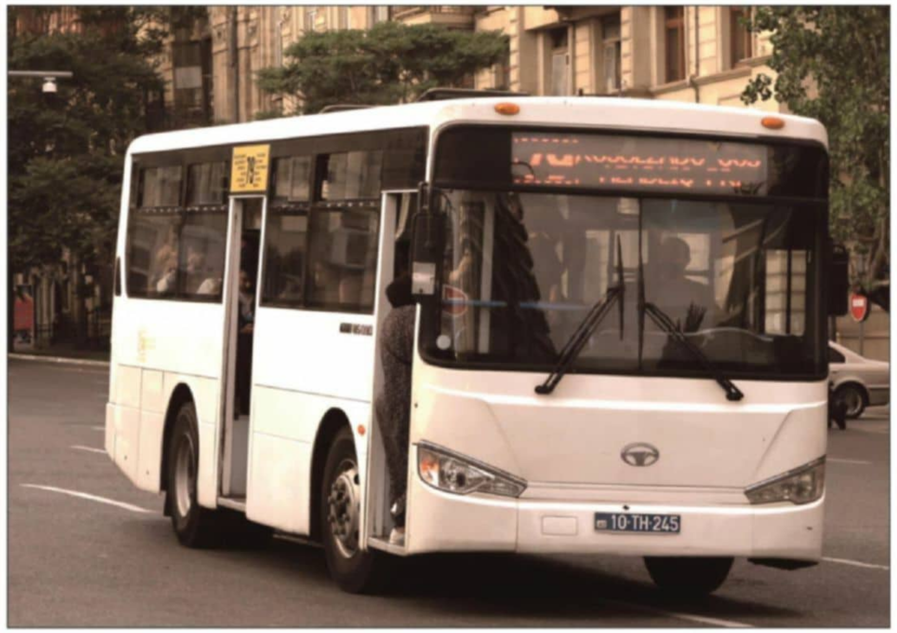
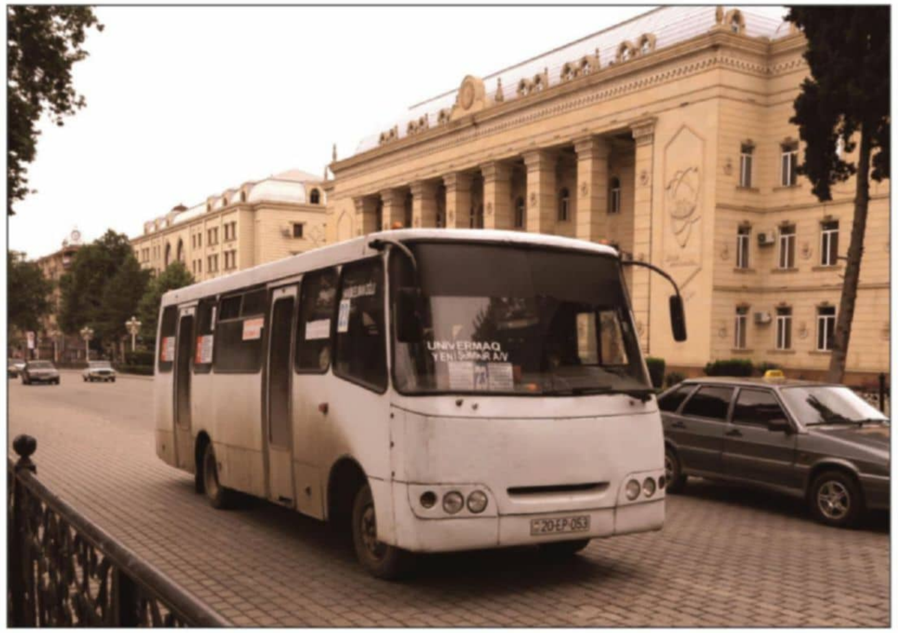
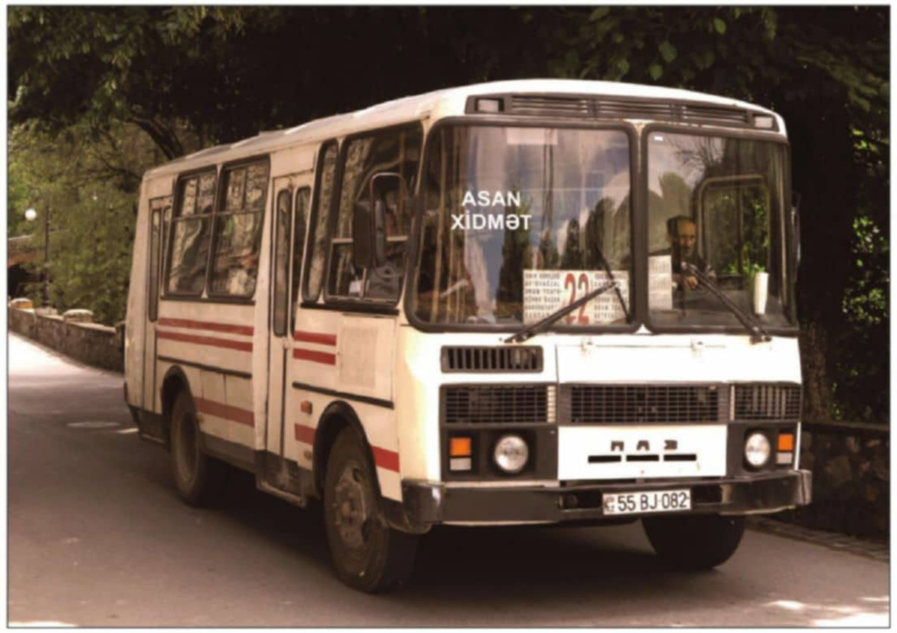


LEFT: Faiqoğlu 10·TH·245, Daewoo BS090 dating from 2013. Operating route 79 turning at 28 May metro station, Baku, before returning north to Baksol Road Crossing.

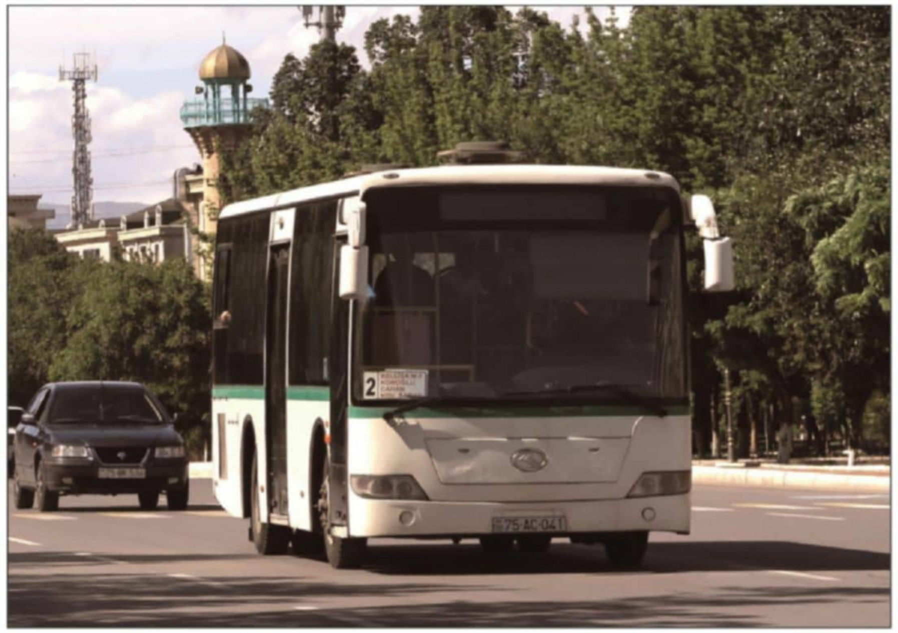
RIGHT: 20·EP·053, an Isuzu operation route 23 in Ganja. Photographed passing the Ganja branch of National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan on Shah Ismayil Khetayi Avenue.

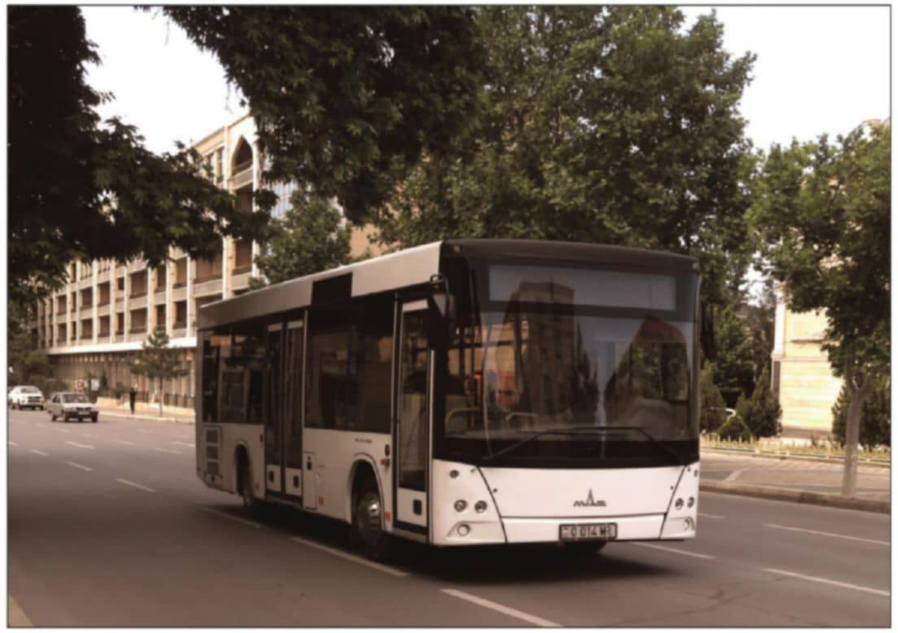




LEFT: 55·BJ·0882, PAZ-3205 operating route 22 in Sheki. Route 22 operates between the Olympic complex, bus terminal, hospital, theatre, old bazaar, caravansary, The Palace of the Sheki Khans, and children's hospital. The route climbs to over 800m on a steep incline. The bus is returning to the city centre passing the caravansary.

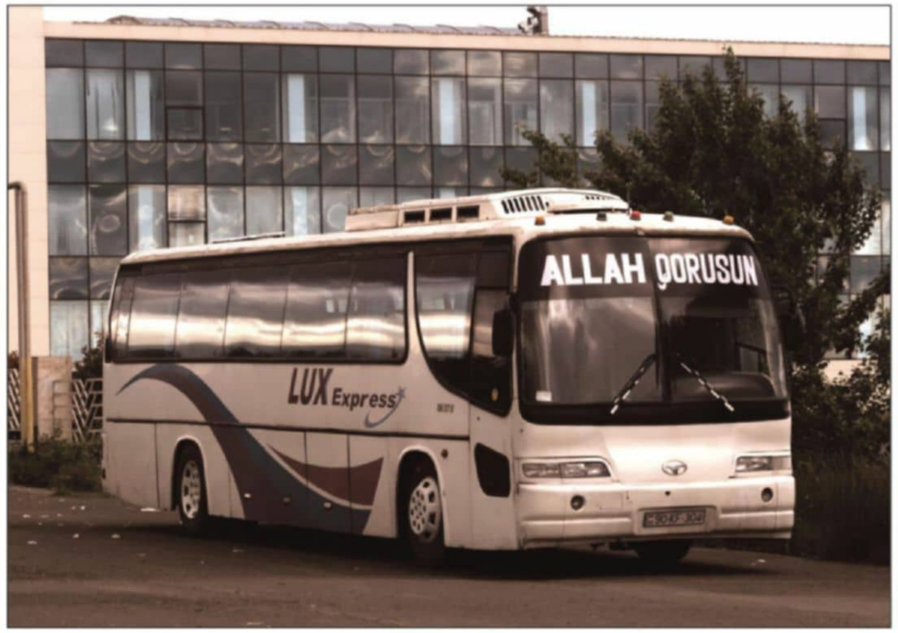
RIGHT: King Long 75·AC·041 operating route 2 on Heydər Əliyev Prospekti, Nakhchivan city.





LEFT: O·014·MR a MAZ 206 in Nakhchivan city. The only one of this type seen during the visit.

RIGHT: Lux Express operate 90·KF·304, a Daewoo BH117H. Photographed in the mountain resort of Qabala.



LION'S ROAR MUTED

TOP: Lion C all-electric school buses on 16 March 2024. (Pierre5018 via Wikipedia)
ABOVE: Lion M all-electric midibus on 29 May 2018. (Crenaissanceman via Wikipedia)

Financial troubles among bus manufacturers continue. The latest casualty as I begin this column is La Compagnie Électrique Lion / Lion Electric Company (hq Saint-Jérôme, c45km NW of Montréal, Canada), which filed for protection from its creditors in both Canada and the USA in December 2024, a status which may change between this issue of BWW going to the printers and it reaching readers. Largest Lion Electric shareholder with a 34% stake is Power Corp. of Canada, a holding company controlled by the billionaire Desmarais family, but it has over 2,600 individual investors said to allege having been misled by "the rosy picture painted in news releases and earnings calls". Their spokesman describes "watch[ing] everything fall apart so quickly" as "completely shocking". By mid-February 2025 Québec's regulatory Autorité des marchés financiers had received 336 complaints about the company.

Autobus Lion/Lion Bus launched its first bus model, the 360°, in 2011. Primarily a schoolbus with several novel features, it had a chassis made by Spartan Chassis and a Cummins diesel engine under a front bonnet (cowl). (Michigan (USA)-based Spartan, called The Shyft Group since June 2020, was a successor to Diamond Reo which filed for bankruptcy in 1974). The Lion 360° was the first full-size schoolbus made in Canada since the demise of Les Entreprises Michel Corbeil in 2007; in fact Lion was founded by former Corbeil executives Marc Bédard (still Lion's CEO) and Camile Chartrand. A CNG-fuelled variant of the 360° was offered from May 2015, but a fully electric version was introduced in the same year and in June 2017 the company rebranded itself with its present name [1].

By the end of 2020 Lion had over 300 buses on the road in Canada and the USA with 6 million miles of service behind them [2]. Its Saint-Jérôme factory had the capacity to produce 2,500 vehicles per annum and it employed 450 people in Canada and at service centres in five widely-scattered locations in the USA. In May 2021 its received its largest order to date (for 260 e-buses for First Student) and during that year it both announced a new facility to manufacture electric buses and trucks in Joliet (Illinois (USA), SW of Chicago, not to be confused with Joliette, c45km ENE of Saint-Jérôme!) and became a public company by "reverse merging" into a special-purpose acquisition company (SPAC) financed by Northern Genesis Acquisition. The announcement that the latter would happen was made on 30 November 2020. Through it Lion Electric hoped to raise more than $500 million in cash, though whether it did is unclear [3].

However, multiple problems persisted – supply chain disruptions, urgent financing needs, scaling issues, a dispute with a battery supplier, delays in subsidy and incentive programs in Canada and the USA, too many vehicle models being developed at the same time (everything from ambulances to garbage trucks [4]), slower EV adoption and (not listed by earlier writers!) gross over-optimism amounting to self-delusion. Lion claimed an order of 1,000 buses from Student Transportation of Canada (STC) in 2021, one for 200 for Langs Bus Lines in SW Ontario in 2021 or 2022 and one for 50 for use in Alberta by Highland Electric Fleets in 2023. All these were provisional contracts dependent on federal grants. Secret conditions for the first "have not yet been met", funding for the second was only approved 2½ years after Lion Electric boasted of the "order" while the third was "renegotiated", whatever that meant. Whatever it did mean, no buses were delivered to HEF. Just 70 of the 200 vehicles for Langs out of this total of 1,250 actually materialised.

A 26ft electric midibus, the Lion M, for transit and shuttle use, was launched in 2018 and Lion Electric also entered the e-truck market. The latter need not concern us [4] but the former is an interesting example of money down the St. Lawrence River. Although I found a firm in Hawaii (of all places!), obviously holding a Lion Electric agency, offering it as part of its portfolio, all other references to the Lion M seemed to come from various exhibitions back in 2018. I began to wonder if any had ever been sold and consulted our North American Country Editors. Wayne Doran had never even heard of the type but after asking around learned of one order for two placed by Bow Valley Regional Transit of Banff (Alberta) in 2019 ... and cancelled after repeated delays!

In 2023 a group of investors including Groupe Mach and the Mirella & Lino Saputo Foundation invested C$90 million in Lion Electric senior secured debentures. Lion's 900,000 sq.ft. plant in Channahon (part of the the city of Joliet), the first dedicated vehicle assembly plant in the Chicago area since 1965 and the largest in the USA dedicated to assembling all-electric medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, including school buses, opened in July 2023 and was set to employ 1,400 staff and produce up to 20,000 vehicles a year. The usual over-the-top expressions of optimism were uttered by local worthies at its grand opening. In September 2023 Nicolas Brunet was appointed as president with a mandate to work with CEO Marc Bédard on "all strategic aspects of the business, with a focus on accelerating sales across the United States and Canada, and oversee all commercial operations".

Exactly one year later Lion Electric faced a "cash crunch". In the quarter ended 30 September 2024 it reported sales of $31 million, down from $80 million a year earlier, deliveries down by 64% and debts totalling $392 million, incurred primarily through establishing the Joliet factory and a battery-pack assembly plant in Mirabel, Québec. It had spent nearly $250 million on these projects and multiplying new models.

On 6 November 2024 Marc Bédard admitted that Lion's future was in doubt. The Québec government, which had already provided C$192 million (US$137 million) [5], said it would do more but only if private investors did likewise. On 18 November Lion Electric said it had received a two-week extension of its credit agreement with three lenders and temporary relief on the conditions of a loan provided by the Caisse de Dépot et Placement du Québec and Finalta Capital Inc., but the new 30 November deadline for meeting its immediate obligations passed without it finding any more funding. By this time – in three waves of layoffs during 2024 – Lion Electric had already reduced its workforce by almost half from the 1,400 on the payroll at the start of 2023 and, with another short-term lifeline from the same creditors expiring on 16 December, it announced early in December that it was "temporarily" laying off about 400 staff "across the company" and halting Channahon operations, leaving about 300 employees to "focus on bus manufacturing, sales and delivery, and customer support" while it continued "to actively evaluate potential alternatives relating to a restructuring of its obligations, a sale of the business or certain of its assets, strategic investments and/or any other alternatives". Nicolas Brunet stepped down from the post of president he'd held for little over a year. In a desperate move to raise cash Lion Electric sold its "innovation center" in Mirabel to Aéroports de Montréal for C$50 million (US$35.1 million). At this stage Mach Capital, the investment arm of Canadian real estate developer Groupe Mach mentioned above, was said to be conducting due diligence on Lion Electric and in discussions to provide more funding, but only if Saputo family members would also help to save the company. Nothing more was heard of this suggestion.

On 17 December Lion Electric announced that no further credit extensions had been obtained, no alternatives had materialized and it now expected to seek protection from creditors by initiating a restructuring process under Canada's Companies Creditors Arrangement Act and to pursue a formal sales and investment solicitation process in respect of the company's business or assets. By the following day it had applied to the Superior Court of Québec for such protection, approval of a formal sale and investment solicitation process and the appointment of Deloitte Restructuring Inc. to oversee the process. The Court granted these requests. Lion Electric now planned to seek recognition of the CCAA proceedings in the USA under Chapter 15 of the USA's Bankruptcy Code. (Chapter 15, introduced in 2005, deals with "insolvency cases involving debtors, assets, claimants, and other parties of interest" in more than one country).

On 3 January 2025 Lion Electric announced a further "temporary" lay-off of around 150 workers in both countries, affecting all departments and leaving only around 160 staff to "concentrate mainly on helping clients with the maintenance of school buses and trucks". At this point it may be noted that the reception of Lion Electric's school buses has been mixed, ranging from "happy with the performance of 25 buses so far with only minor maintenance issues" (an unnamed school district S of Chicago) to "too many problems to list" with just four (Winthrop, Maine). Air brakes failed on a Winthrop bus (new in May 2023) in January 2024, "sending it into a snowbank", and one which had given "satisfactory service" in Huntsville, Ontario, since 2018 caught fire on 13 January 2025. Lion Electric's terms of business seem to restrict maintenance work to its own peripatetic staff and getting "the man from Lion" to turn up when required has been a problem for some operators.

By 8 January 2025 Lion Electric wanted to "pause" building trucks, focus on school buses and return all manufacturing to Saint-Jérôme, saying to potential buyers that making 550 e-buses a year there – just 22% of the plant's potential output of 2,500 – could be profitable. It told them it had about 2,200 vehicles on the road and 33% of the North American electric schoolbus market, having delivered to 28 states of the USA and six Canadian provinces. "On hand" it had 135 completed buses and trucks, plus 50 buses that were 90% complete. Since 19 December 136 "potential buyers" and 11 "firms that could be interested in acquiring company assets on a piecemeal basis" had been approached, the Superior Court of Québec was told on 3 January.

On 7 January Lion Electric's protection from creditors was extended to 14 February. On that date Canadian Press reported that it had been further extended until 4 April, with a deadline of 7 March for bidders to make their offers. That is just too late for this piece to include any subsequent developments but if anything does happen before this issue of BWW236 goes to press you may find a mention of it elsewhere in the magazine.

Lion Electric has been one of the main beneficiaries of a 5-year, $5 billion, federal programme to replace existing diesel schoolbuses in the USA. According to World Resources Institute data it had about 1,600 electric schoolbuses in service and 1,800 more on order there in December 2023, more than its two main competitors, Blue Bird and Thomas Built. According to the Canadian Electric School Bus Alliance about 1,900 electric school buses are on the road in Canada, Lion Electric's total not stated but certainly "the lion's share"! Prince Edward Island has 107 all from Lion Electric in its 357-bus fleet, the highest proportion of any province, but Québec has the vast majority (about 1,300 Lion Electric) thanks to provincial grants for buying e-schoolbuses, which Québec law requires. As already noted slow rollout of federal subsidies for operators to buy e-buses has been one of the major challenges Lion Electric has been facing.

NOTES

1. In the internet age "Lion" is an unfortunate choice. If you try to Google "Lion" and anything to do with buses you will be swamped with results for MAN "Lion's" products.

2. More recent figures quoted here are impossible to reconcile with each other. "About 1,600" in the USA plus "about 1,300" in Quebec and 107 on Prince Edward Island adds up to over 3,000 whereas Lion Electric itself only claims 2,200 on the road. Please read with pinch of salt to hand!

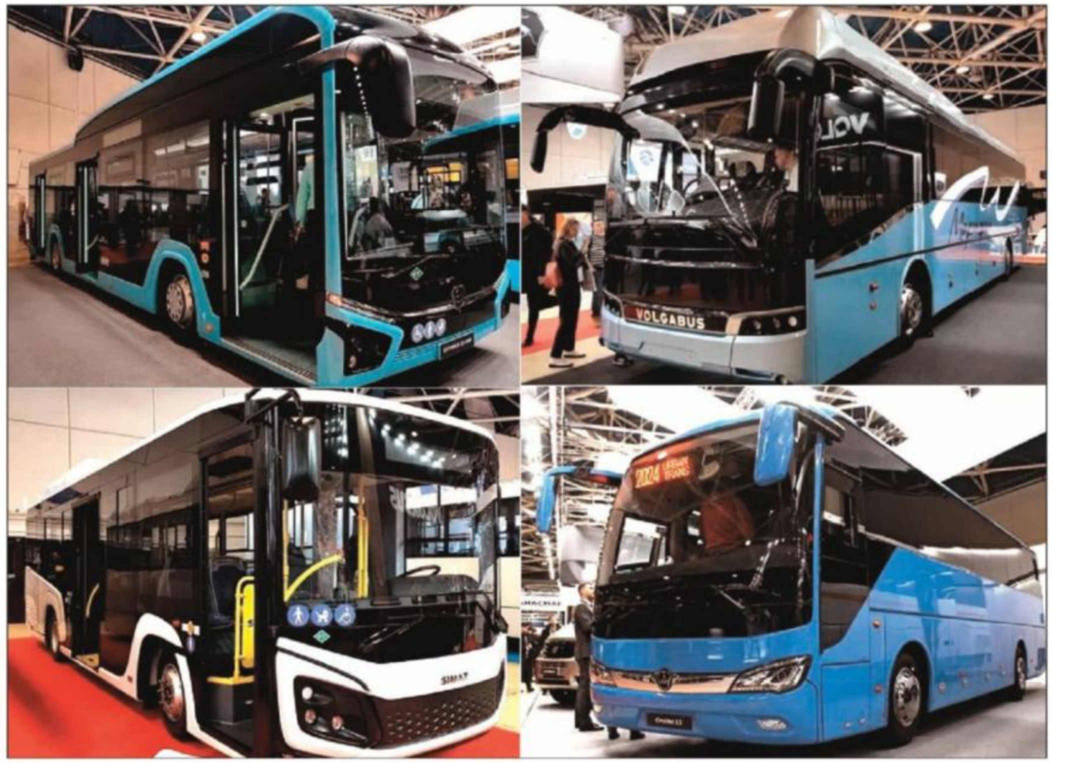
3. $500 million seems to be a journalist's dramatic device, not a factual number. The same figure is quoted as Lion Electric's current indebtedness, but "only" a total "exceeding $411 million" is mentioned in a report of its bankruptcy application.

4.See: https://www.marketscreener.com/quote/stock/THE-LION-ELECTRIC-COMPANY-113477460/news/Quebec-EV-company-Lion-Electric-made-big-promises-but-struggled-to-deliver-49054412/ published on 13 February 2025.

5. Figures of C$177 million from the Quebec government and C$30 million from the Canadian government are also in circulation, as is a mention of National Bank of Canada as a lender to Lion Electric.

RUSSIAN SHOW EXHIBITS

While sub-editing Nikolai Semyonov's contribution to World News in this issue I did some research to try to find out just what he was writing about as my knowledge of Russian buses has not been updated since Soviet times when variety was very limited. This exercise was partly thwarted by my local library's "security" algorithm which denies me access to various Russian websites but I found some pictures taken at **Urbantrans-2024** and **Comtrans-2024** and posted on Instagram by someone believed to be known to his friends as Misha. With little time left to finalise other stories to go in Bus Business Worldwide I thought readers might appreciate a selection of images of current Russian products. Upper left is the LiAZ Citymax 12 at Comtrans-2024. Upper right is the Volgabus 5285-G2 "Marafon" ("Marathon"). Lower left is the Simaz-2258 and lower right is the Cruise 11 coach. Note that the Russian spelling of "Cruise" rhymes with "Louise" rather than "booze"!



Please send reports for these pages to Peter Thompson at news_ed@busesworldwide.org

ALGERIA

ALGER

A brand-new batch of 30 buses for ETUSA (known fleet numbers 111301..111326) was reported on 22 January 2025, Radio Algérie illustrating them by a frequently used picture of 11214, new in 2009! On the same day a Skyscrapercity blogger included an image of a full spec in a post about them. They are a new version of SNVI's city bus introduced in 2024, designated 100VL6. The 12m x 2.55m x 3.24m bus (wheelbase 5.9m) has a Weichai WB10.336N straight-six diesel engine (9.726 litres, 336 hp) at the rear and Voith 864.6S automatic transmission. It has 28 passenger seats and space for 72 standing. Exactly how it differs from previous models is not to hand. A lengthy update to the information in BWW233 has now been submitted to our Editor to become an illustrated Feature in a future issue and hopefully help readers visualise what we are trying to explain about buses in this mystery-filled country and its capital! (David Suffolk)

AUSTRIA

NATIONAL

From 18/11/24 until 13/7/25 the 8,371-metre Tauern railway tunnel is completely closed for modernisation, affecting travel from Salzburg to Villach and Klagenfurt and vice versa as well as local journeys. There is no road between Bad Gastein N of the tunnel and Mallnitz S of it, so those places and others in their respective valleys are effectively cut off from those on the other side of the tunnel for the duration. Daily until 27/6/25 Postbus route 9755 a.k.a. SV220 is scheduled to leave Spittal-Millstättersee rail/bus station northbound at 05..20.20, 21.15 and 22.20) and Bischofshofen station forecourt S'bound at 07..22.15, this hourly service taking 80 minutes in each direction. The only alternative to the railway between Bischofshofen and Spittal an der Drau is the A10/E55 Autobahn far to the east of the valleys served by train. Fortunately both Bischofshofen and Spittal are just off this motorway; however, until June 2025 five pairs of tunnels along a 14-km section of it between Golling and Werfen are also being "saniert" simultaneously with single-lane contra-flow traffic in operation, liable to cause jams and delays. The major road tunnel also known as Tauerntunnel (6.4 km) and the 5.4-km Katschbergtunnel further S are not affected, but how well the rail-replacement bus service is functioning is not to hand. Winter weather will also have been a factor in maintaining it. From 28/6 to 13/7/25 the direct bus will operate Villach Hbf – Spittal-Millstättersee – Bischofshofen and vice versa to cover the closure of more railway but the relevant timetable appears to be not yet available. A separate r-r bus service also advertised as SV220 (but not as 9755) operates daily between Bad Gastein and Schwarzach-St. Veit only from 3/3 to 13/7/25, running 2-hourly at 06.00-22.00 N'bound and 07.15-21.15 plus 22.20 S'bound and taking 40 minutes. Finally, a "Rad- und Pendlershuttle" between Mallnitz-Obervellach and Bad Gastein via "the scenic route" (advertised as route 9755 but not as SV220!) is running N'bound at 06.00 and S'bound at 16.00 until 10 April and at 06/12.00 and 10/16.00 respectively 11 April-4 July. Calling at Obervellach village, Spittal-Millstättersee, Schwarzach-St. Veit, Dorfgastein and Bad Hofgastein en route, it is scheduled to take 3 hrs 10 mins end to end. This is a dial-a-ride service, previous-day reservation compulsory. Cycles are only carried from 11 April. Note that a further closure of the Tauern railway tunnel is scheduled for 2027. (ÖBB publicity, ADAC re roadworks)

INNSBRUCK

Ledermair Reisen based at 6130 Schwaz, have ordered 27 MAN Lion's City E, which will be used around Innsbruck. According to MAN this is the biggest changeover to electrics that there has been in the Tyrol (Autocar & Bus Infos via Clive D'eath)

WIEN REGION

on 25 October 2024, Verkehrsbetriebe Gschwindl GmbH with its subsidiaries Gschwindl Linien GmbH and Gschwindl Reisen GmbH is the largest bus operator in the Weinviertel and the second-largest private operator of bus routes in Wien after Dr. Richard, working 16 routes contracted out by Wiener Linien GmbH, one for Österreichische Post AG and one for the G3 Shopping Resort, plus 31 regional routes in Niederösterreich, Korneuburg town services 1/2 and Ortsverkehr Langenzersbach route 856. Austrotouring Verkehrsbetriebe GmbH, which operates Busterminal Vienna, also belongs to the Gschwindl group, which has its head office at Großebersdorf, about 20 km roughly N of Wien, where the history of the family goes back to the 17th century. Gschwindl's main operating base is now at Trauzlgasse 1 in Wien-Strebersdorf; all activities have been concentrated there since April 2022. Five sites previously occupied – Nordwestbahnhof, Wolfganggasse, Oberlaaer Straße and Gorskistraße (all by buses) and Hagenbrunn (by coaches) – were all closed between 2016 and 2023. Gschwindl still has a depot at Poysdorf (c60km NNE of Wien, only c15km S of the Czech frontier) and some buses are parked at locations in Hackinger Straße (a Dr. Richard site) and Talpagasse in Wien.

The founder of the family firm, Josef G., born in 1902, built up a transport business from the mid-1920s, motorising with a Czech-made lorry in 1934/5 and a Wien-built Gräf & Stift in 1936/7. Ownership subsequently passed through Herbert G. senior and Herbert G. junior to today's fourth generation of the family. During World War II wife Hermine was left to run the business after her husband was called up; whether her husband was Josef or Herbert senior is unclear, as is whether she was still running it when the firm began carrying passengers after the war ended. This was initially done out of necessity to connect starving city dwellers with food-producing farmers, apparently in some kind of barter arrangement. Gschwindl's first Gräf & Stift bus was obtained some time later and the business grew year by year. In the 1970s and 1980s Gschwindl was a sub-contractor to Wiener Verkehrsbetriebe but after losing that work it ceased to be a service-bus operator until 1 March 2012, when it took over Wiener Lokalbahnen Busbetrieb GmbH (WLBB) and that operator's routes 16A, 33A, 37A, 67A, 70A and 80A plus the IKEA-Bus. WLBB was renamed Herbert Gschwindl Buslinien GmbH. At various dates between 18 October 2012 and 1 October 2022 Gschwindl took over routes 5B, 19A, 20A/B, 22A, 25A, 41A, 53A, 54A/B, 60A, 92A/B, BZW and G3, to which list was added route 5A on 1 January 2024. Routes 33A, 37A and 80A are also still operated. (That is 19 routes rather than the 18 mentioned above but 54A/B seem to be two directions of the same circular). Exactly when Gschwindl took over its various regional routes is not stated in its Wikipedia article and the list is really too long to quote here, but of particular interest are: route 150 from Wien-Floridsdorf to Bernhardsthal, only a few kilometres from the Czech town of Břeclav, although not connected with it by a direct road; routes 486/8/9 out of Krems, which is 75km WNW of Wien; a Wien-Floridsdorf/Mistelbach/Zistersdorf triangle (500 Floridsdorf-Mistelbach, 505 Floridsdorf-Zistersdorf and 567 Mistelbach-Zistersdorf) and a whole group of routes out of Mistelbach and Poysdorf (560-572), 560 and 566 both being Mistelbach-Bernhardsthal. Gschwindl certainly operates over a wide area. (From July 2016 to July 2017 it worked Wien-Berlin, Wien-Venezia and Praha-Venezia routes on contract to ÖBB-Fernbus GmbH).

According to Wikipedia Gschwindl took over 34 M-B Citaro from WLBB; although the newest only dated from 2010, the last seem to have been sold in 2016. Wikipedia's "current" fleet summary of 84 Citaro of 2015-20 and 14 Citaro G of 2014/8 is badly out of date; much of the fleet listed as current by busphoto.eu in January 2025 consists of Setra S415LE business 6150-98 of February/March 2021 and 6251-67 of January (6264-7 May) 2022. The second digit of the fleet number indicates year new (the initial 6 seems to denote Euro 6 engine) and there are also Citaro 6800/3/4 of December 2018 (survivors of 6800-17), 6900-36 (minus already sold 6907/18) of December 2019, 6000-2 of Jan/Feb 2020 (which look as if they should have been 6937-9) and 6201-14 of Sep-Nov 2022. At that point busphoto.eu's record dries up somewhat and only 6301-3/11/23/5/7/8/30 are listed with no date except for Jan 2023 for 6301-3, plus 6401 (December 2024). Articulated buses get 8xxx numbers and only Citaro G 8305/10/3 of 2023 and 8801/11 of 2018 are listed as current. We suspect the former are some of a batch of at least 13, perhaps 14 to replace Wikipedia's 8402/3 of 2014 and 8800-11. (8400-13 were mostly withdrawn in January 2020, 8402/3 surviving until November 2022, while 8800/2-10 at least were withdrawn in 2023-4. All these buses found new homes in Germany or Switzerland, as did 8209/11 back in Sep/Oct 2018; 8201-8/10 had already gone to Split in Croatia (q.v.) in January 2018. To confuse matters a little, Wiener Linien 8717/21, new in December 2013, were acquired in April or May 2022 and appropriately numbered 8301/2; they moved on to Germany in 2023). At least some of the Citaro new from 2019 onwards are hybrids but none of 6201-14 are listed as such, nor are some of the 63xx, 6401 and the artics. Also new in recent years are Setra S415UL 6199 (April 2021) and M-B Tourismo 17RHD-IIIL 6250 (May 2022). Steyr 380b cabrio MI 811 EG and W 2512 MW of 1950 and 380q W 5185 MW of 1955, mentioned in BWW235, are owned by Gschwindl, which has or had several other "Oldtimer", Wikipedia listing four acquired from ÖBB Straßennostalgie in 2014. (Wikipedia, busphoto.eu, Gschwindl website)

BELARUS

NATIONAL

At Urbantrans-2024 in Moskva (Russia) in December 2024 KF-Avto of Barysaw / Borisov (c75km NE of Minsk) presented its AVIOR 8.45m x 2.45m x 3.05m general-purpose large minibus produced jointly with Ankai of China. It has Chinese components but Belarusian side panelling of reinforced plastic. According to the spec available online in March 2025 the 29-seat "AVIOR tourist bus" has a Weichai WP41NQ170E61 4.1-litre, 170-hp Euro-6 diesel engine located near the driver and a FastGear 5DS70T 5-speed mechanical gearbox. Our Russian correspondent quotes a 4.3-litre, 179-hp engine and 6-speed gearbox and says two-door urban, suburban and school versions are available and that smaller buses on British Maxus G10 chassis with a 160 hp diesel engine are also offered. MAZ of Minsk, the country's largest manufacturer, also attended Urbantrans-2024 with its further facelifted large rigid low-floor trolleybus MAZ-303, able to cover up to 20 km off-wire with a full load of 80+ passengers and re-charge its batteries after rejoining the overhead. This exhibit was decorated to celebrate its maker's 70th anniversary. So far its home city has taken only one example, but the first production batch of 39 has gone to Kazan' in Russia (q.v.). (Nikolai Semyonov, AVIOR spec via David Suffolk)

BELGIUM

All items to John Smith please at 289 Newbridge Road, Bath, BA1 3HN or j.shambrooksmith@btinternet.com Reports are from Tram 2000 unless otherwise attributed.

NATIONAL

The bankrupt Van Hool concern has been bought out by the Dutch bus manufacturer VDL.

DE LIJN

The undertaking has the following vehicles on order: 92 standard electric buses from BYD, 65 Iveco E-Way buses and 6 electric midibuses from Chinese manufacturer CRRC. The latter are for the city services in Mechelen.

The De Lijn contractor Ganda Cars has acquired a new electric bus from the Chinese manufacturer Higer which is thought to be the first bus from this manufacturer in Belgium.

STIB/MIVB

As at 23.09.24 the undertaking had 601 buses, made up of 3 electric midibuses, 364 standard buses, 3 standard electric buses, 216 artics and 15 electric artics.

TEC

TEC a la Demande at Louvain-la-Neuve. Funding has been promised by the four communes served to finance this service up to 31.1.2025. This amounts to €115,000 p.a.

BOLIVIA

NATIONAL

Long-distance bus travel in Bolivia appears to be rather a risky affair. On 26 January 2025 a Panamericana bus en route from La Paz to Villazón (Potosí departamento, on the Argentinian border), driven by a 24-year-old man with a lower-category driving licence than required, left the road while taking a curve and fell into a ravine, killing 19 passengers. The accident was blamed on excessive speed and the driver's lack of skill. He was arrested and the company's operations compulsorily suspended while technical and safety checks were carried out, other "operational irregularities" having been identified. Less than a month later, around midday on 17 February, an even more serious crash in the same departamento hit the world headlines. In the Yocalla area, about 311 km from its destination, a bus of the San José company en route from Potosi to Oruro fell 800 metres down a ravine. Widely reported as 30 or 31, the death toll was subsequently established as 28 (19 men, 6 women, 3 children) and a further 14 people were injured. This accident occurred on a section of road with sharp curves, so the initial hypothesis was that the driver was going at high speed and lost control, but investigations into its exact cause were still ongoing. Potosí, a mountainous area where rain and fog are frequent, accounts for 10.6% of Bolivia's fatal road accidents, which kill around 1,400 people annually nationwide (www.infobae.com), but it has no monopoly of serious bus crashes. Eleven people, including two children and a teenage girl, died when a Trans Saipina bus plunged "off a cliff" in the early hours of 30 December 2022. It had left Santa Cruz de la Sierra carrying 47 passengers at 19.30 the previous evening and was en route to Saipina, a small town in eastern Bolivia presumed to be the operator's home. Figures quoted for injured ranged from 23 to 41 (!) but most authoritative seemed to be 28, which with 11 dead matched the number of passengers said to have been on board when it crashed (38) plus one driver. Thirteen casualties were serious enough to be transferred from Saipina health centre to the hospital back at Santa Cruz. Around 01.00 on 2 March 2021 a Trans Carrasco bus carrying students from the Universidad Pública de El Alto travelling along road 7 between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz fell 150 metres "into an abyss" near kilometre 72, killing 21 and injuring 17. The Bolivian Air Force had to be called out to rescue the injured and recover the dead (Wikipedia article "Colomi bus crash"). And on the Sunday night preceding 23 April 2019 a bus operated by "Total" plunged over 200 metres "into a ravine" while en route from La Paz to Rurrenabaque, killing 25 (bbc.co.uk). We think "Total" may actually be Todo Tourismo of La Paz, but Rurrenabaque is well N of La Paz, whereas Todo Tourismo only seems to advertise a service to Uyuni, far to the south, so we must not assume too much. Todo is the only operator mentioned here for which a website has been found. A page of its fleet's "technical characteristics" mentions Volvo B430R and Marcopolo Viaggio 1050-bodied Mercedes-Benz OF-1721 coaches. Other operators seem to rely on Facebook, which is problematic for your present reporter. (David Suffolk)

CAMBODIA

PHNOM PENH

A lengthy update referred to in "Bus Business Worldwide" in BWW236 got deferred for space reasons and is now being turned into a Feature article for a future issue. The item which gave rise to the research for it was a report that 1,000 new JMC Co-star minibuses were to be delivered - 400 in 2023, 300 in 2024 and the remaining 300 in 2025. Some may be destined for provincial cities rather than the capital. The full story is much more convoluted and hopefully interesting. We crave your patience and apologise for the "hanging chad" in BWW236!

CANADA

Please send all news items to **Wayne Doran** at 25 Blueberry Lane, Canton Center, CT 06019-4502, USA or email waynedoran1@comcast.net. Canadian news is arranged by province.

Alberta

EDMONTON

ETS ended 2024 with an incredible 61.6 million trips, which is a 15% increase from 2023 and a 12% increase from 2019 (pre-Covid) levels!

British Columbia

VICTORIA

Last year saw the launch of the BusReady youth program and orders for redesigned buses, many of which will be hybrid or electric. Now, after a busy year for BC Transit, there's much more in store for transit on the South Island in 2025. First, Victoria riders will have more mobile payment options, joining Vancouver. Riders will have the ability to pay with debit, credit, and mobile wallets with the next phase of BC Transit's Umo project coming in 2025. Debuted in 2024, the Umo system allows for digital app payments. In the upcoming phase, more payment options will be available for transit users. BC Transit is also set to expand its vehicle services in 2025 to meet growing public demand. The Victoria Regional Transit Commission has approved an increase in services during the 2025–26 fiscal year. New buses ordered in 2024 will begin rolling out in 2025. Among them are 10 heavy-duty electric buses expected to arrive in Victoria early in the year. To address immediate needs, BC Transit has non-electric buses coming – BC Transit is in the process of purchasing 80 diesel double-decker buses. In addition to new buses, several infrastructure projects and initiatives are coming in 2025. A new handyDART centre will open in View Royal, aimed at enhancing ridership and providing additional support for vulnerable communities. Construction is also wrapping up on View Royal transit priority lanes, designed to provide smoother, faster service for all buses using the corridor. Work will continue in Colwood, where BC Transit will break ground on the transit priority lane project's next phase. Colwood will also host a new 30,000-square-foot distribution centre for BC Transit. The year marks a significant period of growth for BC Transit, which saw a 14 per cent increase in boardings on fixed-route services in 2024. This rise in ridership led the province to fund 100,000 new annual service hours and 38 new buses for the 2024–25 fiscal year—the largest single-year expansion in BC Transit's history.

Manitoba

WINNIPEG

The first of Winnipeg Transit's new electric buses has arrived. The city expects to receive dozens of zero emission buses over the next two years. The city says the new buses will begin limited service in April, after the spring schedule change.

New Brunswick

RIVERVIEW

The Town of Riverview plans to buy a pair of new buses, while also improving transit shelters, hiring a coordinator, and adjusting routes as part of upgrades to the city's public transit system. The purchase of two new buses would bring the southeast New Brunswick town's total fleet to five, and would cost an estimated $1.8 million. The town currently owns just two buses, with another one on order and expected to arrive later this year. Ridership levels in Riverview are low, primarily because of relatively low levels of investment in transit. Last year, there was an average of 9,800 passenger trips per month, compared to just 3,000 during the dog days of the pandemic. Riverview has just two weekday routes (the 85 Riverview Connector and 86 Pinewood) and two weekend routes (the 81 Riverview and 82 Riverview Place). The frequency of trips on those routes ranges from every 35-40 minutes on the 86 Pinewood route to just three trips per week on the 82 Riverview Place. All but one of those routes link to the Avenir Centre in downtown Moncton, where they connect to the larger Codiac Transpo network covering Greater Moncton. The details of route changes will be confirmed later, but the general idea is to reorganize the current transit network into three routes linking Riverview to downtown Moncton, all of them operating seven days a week, at intervals of between 30 and 60 minutes. The routes would be focused on "main corridors and growing communities" and the proposed schedule would result in an approximate doubling of service hours.

Ontario

OAKVILLE

While customers are charging to their PRESTO cards, Oakville Transit is charging something else: 15 new, electric buses. Oakville Transit has added 15 new battery-electric buses to its service, a move aligned with the town's ongoing efforts to modernize public transportation and reduce environmental impact. The 40-foot Nova LFSE buses, designated for conventional fixed routes, were officially unveiled at a special event on Friday, Jan. 31, 2025, at the Oakville Transit Facility. According to the Town of Oakville, these new buses will begin service this winter. Transit ridership has been increasing and is expected to continue growing, especially with Oakville's fare-free policy for children, youth (ages 0-19), and seniors (65+). Oakville Transit also offers free transfers for riders connecting to and from GO train services, helping to make public transit more accessible to a wider range of residents. The new electric buses, which can travel up to 350 kilometres per charge, were funded through the Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (PTIS) of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). The Town of Oakville covered 30 per cent of the cost. Oakville first introduced electric buses in February 2023, with 15 smaller-capacity, battery-electric buses used for its On-Demand service. With the ICIP funding, the town aims to transition 50 per cent of its fleet—74 out of 135 buses—to electric power by 2026. The Town of Oakville says its goal is to add 12 more small-capacity buses and 32 large capacity electric buses in the next two years. However, the long-term shift to electric buses for Oakville Transit remains uncertain. Town councillors recently voted to purchase diesel buses once ICIP funding expires, citing rising costs. A report from Kawun outlined that replacing the remaining diesel fleet with battery-electric buses would cost taxpayers an estimated $963 million over the next 25 years, compared to $500 million for diesel replacements. Additionally, long-term contracts to lease and operate charging infrastructure are expected to cost $108.5 million over 20 years.

OTTAWA

OC Transpo transported nearly 68 million passengers in 2024, as ridership increased over 2023. A report for the Transit Committee shows OC Transpo saw 67.9 million passenger trips on buses and the O-Train last year, up from 64.2 million trips in 2023 and 50.3 million trips in 2022. September was the highest ridership month, with 7 million trips, followed by 6.7 million trips in both October and November. There were 5.6 million passenger trips in December, down three per cent from December 2023. Staff say that was the first decline in year-over-year ridership in an individual month since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. OC Transpo saw a boost in ridership, as federal government workers returned to the office at least three days a week, starting in September. The report shows OC Transpo's on-time performance was lower than the target for last year. Service on frequent routes was on time 82 per cent of the time, while less frequent routes were on time at 74 per cent of the time. Staff say nine per cent of trips arrived more than one minute early on less frequent routes.

OC Transpo is looking to buy 40 new diesel buses as it struggles to keep its aging fleet on the roads and deals with delays for the new electric buses. The city cancelled plans to purchase 60-foot electric buses last year due to delays. The Transit Commission directed staff to look for used diesel articulated buses to purchase while OC Transpo waits for the arrival of electric buses. Staff say no Canadian agencies have used 60-foot buses available to meet OC Transpo's criteria and the service is now looking to international transit agencies. OC Transpo is using the Metrolinx Joint Procurement Initiative and working with New Flyer Industries to buy 40 or more 60-foot diesel articulated buses. The buses will be delivered at the end of 2026 or start of 2027. OC Transpo had planned to buy 450 electric buses, at a cost of $1 billion. Seventy-four buses were scheduled to arrive last year, but only four e-buses have arrived in Ottawa and 47 buses will be arriving until the start of 2026. Ottawa's target is to have 350 zero-emission buses on the roads by 2027.

Introduction of electric vehicles mean that Drivers are personally responsible for making sure it's recharged. The Driver needs to get the bus into the sweet spot — between the two yellow lines, the door aligned with a separate green line — before the charger descends into place on top of rooftop rails. Drivers will also have to get used to what's known in the industry as "range anxiety." The worry that a bus won't remain charged long enough can send drivers back to the garage prematurely. Drivers who are feeling range anxiety can get an update from the control room, which is also being overhauled with new monitoring software. The federal government's zero-emission transit fund gave a financial shot in the arm to cities waffling on the transition, and heaped work orders onto the nation's few e-bus manufacturers. Initial delays of the rollout in Ottawa had nothing to do with the technology. It was the considerable time it takes to negotiate funding through an entirely new program. On the manufacturing side, pandemic-era chaos in the supply chain continued to cause delays. Then there's the sheer complexity of building a system that requires not only new infrastructure, but also new software and ways of working. Ottawa isn't abandoning diesel altogether. The city recently set aside $75 million to purchase more vehicles for its non-electric fleet, in order to offset the electric bus delays and ease the strain on the hundreds of buses already at the end of their life. As for electric, four more New Flyer vehicles are being inspected, and a new batch from Nova Bus has already rolled off the production line.

TORONTO

The Toronto Transit Commission received 68 New Flyer XDE60 buses in 2023-24, their first new articulated buses since the Nova LFS Artics were delivered nearly 10 years ago. Most of these buses entered service between February and August of this year; however, two units (9405 and 9409) were held back for unknown reasons, despite having been delivered in November 2023. They finally entered revenue service in November 2024.

YORK

Volvo Group's subsidiary, Nova Bus has been contracted to supply 80 LFSe+ electric buses to the Regional Municipality of York in Ontario, Canada. Under this contract, the vehicles will be manufactured at Nova Bus's Saint-Eustache plant in Québec, with deliveries scheduled to begin in 2026. By 2050, the Regional Municipality of York plans to deploy a fully electric bus fleet, reducing emissions by approximately 15,982 tons annually. This will support the region's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by the same year. The LFSe+ low-floor electric bus is designed for urban operations. The model features two charging options, with pantograph and plug-in systems. Meanwhile, its modular battery design allows storage of up to 564 kWh of onboard energy, optimising operational efficiency.

Prince Edward Island
CHARLOTTETOWN

A plan to run more than 100 Prince Edward Island school buses on green energy has run into a roadblock due to uncertainty of the future of the company that's building the fleet. Lion Electric, which was building the electric buses, has filed for receivership, putting the electric bus project on hold. In an email to CTV News, a spokesperson for Lion Electric says they remain dedicated to providing the highest level of support and information possible to assist P.E.I. remotely in resolving their issues under the circumstances. The situation on P.E.I. highlights the challenges of EV expansion in the region. New Brunswick is currently in a testing phase, where 22 of its 1,075 school buses provincewide are now electric. New Brunswick's current fleet of EV buses are circulating in Moncton and Saint John. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have all partnered together on a feasibility study to determine what portion of the fleet can be electrified, given climate and other factors. Despite the setback on the island, the province says it still sees a future with a full fleet of EV buses as the goal of hitting net zero by 2040.

CHILE

NATIONAL

At the end of 2024 Brazilian bus manufacturer Marcopolo acquired a 40% stake in Chilean innovator Reborn Electric Motors for $4 million. This strategic investment aims to capture a significant share of Latin America's growing electric bus market. Reborn, founded in 2019, has already made headlines by producing the first electric bus to operate in Antarctica. This achievement aligns with Marcopolo's goal to lead in sustainable transport solutions across the continent. The timing is opportune. Latin America's electric bus market is projected to grow by 15% annually until 2025. Currently, 5,900 electric buses operate in 41 cities across the region, with Chile leading at 2,659 units. (The Rio Times)

SANTIAGO

In 2025, 1,257 electric buses will be added on 121 routes, benefiting communes such as La Granja, San Miguel and La Florida. The Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications (MTT) reported on the incorporation of 50 new electric buses to the Red Movilidad system, which will replace the same number of diesel vehicles. The buses, owned by the company Vule, aim to improve the experience of passengers traveling through the northwestern and downtown areas of Santiago.

On the list of benefited communes are Quilicura, Renca, Independencia, Conchalí and Santiago.In this way, the new machines will begin operating on Monday, February 10 on routes 307, 307c, 307e, 308, 308c, 314, 314c, 315e and B45.

In detail, that day the first 30 buses will be incorporated, while as of Monday, February 17, the other 20 will be added. As a result of the above, during 2025 1,257 new buses will be incorporated in the capital, distributed among 121 routes. In this way, residents of communes such as La Granja, San Miguel, San Ramón, La Florida and Pedro Aguirre Cerda will benefit.

An additional fact is that, currently, there are 2,480 vehicles with these characteristics, and it is expected that by the end of the year three out of five will be electric. (elmostrador.cl via Mike Power)

Santiago de Chile establishes itself as the city with the most electric buses in operation outside of China. According to data from Xinhua, a Chinese news agency, the southern capital tops this list. Currently, it has approximately 2,500 electric buses in circulation, with sustained growth thanks to successive tenders that have allowed the renewal of the vehicle fleet. The most recent one, held in 2024, will incorporate 1,267 new electric buses, increasing the share of electromobility in the public transport system. According to the Diario AS Chile, of the mentioned tender, 70.6% was awarded to Grupo Cabal, a bus distribution company, which will deliver 895 electric buses manufactured by the Chinese company Zhong Tong. Tomislav Matijevic, CEO of Grupo Cabal, stated to AS Chile that the tender allows reaching a total of 3,681 electric buses. (Latam Mobility)

CHINA

NATIONAL

China will extend licence age limits for drivers of medium-sized and large buses as part of broader efforts to address the challenges posed by an aging population, falling birth rate and a shrinking labour pool. Keeping older transportation workers on the payroll will be key to helping maintain stability across China's vast transportation system in the medium-term as the sector plans to adopt more autonomous vehicles. Just over a decade ago, Beijing allowed male bus drivers to retire five years earlier - at the age of 55 - for health reasons, as it was concerned about operational safety. China has since reversed course due to its declining work force. From next year, the maximum age that a person can apply for a licence to drive and operate a medium-sized or large bus, will be raised to 63 from 60, the Public Security Ministry said in a statement in December. Drivers over 63 can also apply for a licence extension of up to three years, provided they pass medical exams and tests on memory, situational judgment and reaction time. (Reuters)

In 2024, the total export volume of Chinese buses with "new energy" technology, which the Chinese include BEV and FCEV buses, reached 15,444 units, as reported by chinabuses.org. However, this sum also includes minibuses and midibuses if they are over 3.5 metres long. The 15,444 buses represent an increase of 28.3% compared to 2023.

BYD held the top position with 3,582 exported buses with new drive technology, making it the only company among the Chinese bus manufacturers to export more than 3,000 buses with new drive technology annually. Yutong Bus exported 2,700 buses with new drive technology last year, jumping from third place in 2023 to second place in 2024, according to chinabuses.org. (Omnibus News)

BEIJING

Foton AUV has delivered 500 electric minibuses to Beijing Public Transport (described as "micro circulation" buses.) (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

HONG KONG

Alexander Dennis has delivered a further nine next-generation Enviro500EV battery-electric tri-axle double-deckers to Hong Kong customer MTR Corporation. They are part of a larger order for 35 of the type. A pre-production vehicle entered service as MTR Corporation's first battery-electric bus in June 2024 and the remaining examples will follow during 2025 and 2026, the manufacturer says. MTR provides feeder bus services to the Mass Transit Railway system for residents in the north-west New Territories. Enviro500EV buses for Hong Kong customers are fully built in China by Alexander Dennis partner Zhuhai Guangtong Vehicle Manufacture Company. The 12m MTR vehicles seat 86 and have room for a wheelchair user. Three-point belts are at each position. Battery capacity is 472kWh, which Alexander Dennis adds will deliver "a meaningful operational range between charges." (Route One)

CROATIA

SPLIT

Split, Croatia's second city with a city-proper population of 150,410 in 2021, was last reported on in BWW216. Further to that report, the nine artics Promet Split d.o.o. bought second-hand in January 2018 are 310-8, Mercedes-Benz Citaro G new as Gschwindl (q.v. Austria / Wien Region) 8206/1/3/4/10/02/5/8/7 in 2012. MAN Lion's City A21/NL323 001-14 were new in July 2021. M-B Citaro G 015-34 of September 2019 were followed by ten more (035-44) and Iveco Crossway LE City 12M 045-52 in 2020. The year 2022 saw the arrival of MAN Lion's City 12C/NL330 053-60, M-B Intouro III 061-8, Iveco Crossway LE City 12M 069-76, Iveco Daily/AS Domžale Rapido 077-82, M-B Citaro G 083-92 and Otokar Vectio U LE 093-9. The MAN were new in June, the Citaro artics in September, the rest at unstated times. At this

POSTBUS
H2
BD 9502

100% ELECTRIC
9092
BCTransit

SORRY... OUT OF SERVICE
2401
OAKVILLE TRANSIT
WE'RE ELECTRIC

TOP: Austria. Postbus BD 9502 is a Solaris Urbino 12 IV Hydrogen in Villach on 05/07/24. (Michal Dekánek)

MIDDLE: Canada. 9092 is one of the New Flyer electric buses that will make up BC Transits all electric fleet, promised by 2040. (Michal Dekánek)

BOTTOM: Canada. Here is Oakville Transit 2401, a 2024 Nova LFSe+, departing for its maiden voyage into service. (Jan Boic)

TOP: Czechia. **Emerging from January's winter's gloom while operating a skibus service at Horní Malá Úpa is a Karosa Recreo C955 of Roman Koula.** (Jan Marek)

MIDDLE: Czechia. **New in 2021, Ostrava 7311 is a Rošero-P First FCLEI CNG at Hranečník on 25/11/24.** (Martin Harák)

BOTTOM: Czechia. **Seen in Plzeň on 22/01/25, AKV 8P2 9525 is a Setra S418LE business.** (Martin Harák)

point the money must have run short or the bargains irresistible, as 2023's purchases were all second-hand. No. 100 is a M-B Sprinter 519CDI Travel 65 of 2011, acquired in January, source not known, while 101-10 are Citaro G of 2015, ex-Gschwindl 8785-8/91/2/5/8/800/3 in October, and 111-8 are MAN Lion's City A21/NL323 of 2017, ex- ÖBB Postbus 14984-6/8/97/8/779/8 in November. The only 2024 arrival reported is Iveco Daily 50C17 119, ex Rijeka in February. The rest of the 172-vehicle fleet consists of MAN Lion's Regio R12/ÜL314 246/8-54, M-B O530 263-5 and O530G 266-75, all of 2008, and assorted buses mainly new in 2010-13 numbered between 275 and 310. The oldest is actually O530G 308 of 2006, acquired from Tübingen in December 2016. (busphoto.eu)

VELIKA GORICA

To correct the piece under "National" in BWW236, "Velika" means "high", not "old", which would be "Stara". DMS apologises for forgetting his 1960s school Russian from which all his fragmentary understanding of Slav languages derives!

VINKOVCI

Vinkovci, in the far E of Croatia, about 35 km SSE of Osijek, is 12th by city-proper population (28,247 in 2021) and was reported on in BWW217. Polet d.o.o. (www.polet.hr, logo "Polet Vinkovci") began with five buses in 1964. It is a limited liability company owned 63.67% by the city of Vinkovci and 36.33% by the "city" of Otok (pop. 3,576, 76th by cpp!) and the local authorities of Nijemci, Stari Jankovci, Tovarnik, Nuštar, Tordinci, Jarmina, Ivankovo, Stari Mikanovci and Rokovci–Andrijaševci. Most of its activities are concerned with providing urban services in Vinkovci (4 routes, 1-4) and intra-county services connecting all places in Vukovar-Srijem county. It owns an 8805 sq.m. bus station at Trg kralja Tomislava 1, Vinkovci, which has a waiting room with 32 seats, a toilet and two ticket offices, 13 covered and 7 "auxiliary" platforms, a parking area, an entrance/exit ramp for recording/controlling arrivals and departures and video surveillance equipment. This bus station is used by various other operators; a list of them includes Arriva, Čazmatrans, Croatiabus d.d., Darojković Promet , Flixbus, Francuzevic, Herc-Tours d.o.o. and Slavonija Bus d.o.o. Polet Vinkovci fleet data on busphoto.eu seems scrappy and possibly out of date. Only four of the seven VDL Citea LLE-120 (VK 189/92-4 FA) new in February 2020 are listed and four ex-Hamburg M-B Citaro new in 1997 and acquired in 2003 are still shown as current among just 11 current and 8 "not current" vehicles altogether, six of the latter being 1997-8 Volvo B10B/Eurobus AV120L "location and status unknown" (as opposed to "withdrawn"). The Citea were financed 85% by the EU Cohesion Fund and 15% by the Croatian state.

CZECHIA

News from **Martin Harák** unless otherwise indicated; Email medtoc@volny.cz

BRECLAV

BORS of Breclav has been awarded a 10 year contract to run the 10 route urban network in Trebic in Vysocina region. The 25 new buses are 10 SOR ENS e buses and 15 SOR NS 12 diesel buses. BORS has been using CNG buses in Breclav. In January 2025 it received 5 new SOR NSG12 CNG buses. It also has 15 Scania Citywide CNG buses there (Martin Harak)

BORS Břeclav was awarded the contract for the provision of urban bus transport in Třebíč in the Vysočina Region. Since January, 25 new buses have been available, ten of which will be fully electric SOR ENS 12 and the remaining diesel SOR NS 12. This is the first major experience with electric buses for BORS Břeclav. In addition to cleaner operation, it promises easier operation or lower maintenance costs. The infrastructure for recharging the buses (transformer and charging stations) was supplied by the Slovak company Ejoin, which installed them in garages in Trebic. The city signed a ten-year contract with the operator, which started on 1 January 2025. The public transport system in Trebíč consists of ten lines in total.

The Břeclav company BORS has a lot of experience with alternative CNG propulsion, which it has been using for many years on urban transport in the South Moravian city of Břeclav. There, the operator provides transport on 9 lines of urban transport. In January Břeclav renewed and supplemented its fleet with five new SOR NSG 12 CNG powered buses. In addition, the city operates 14 CNG buses of the Scania Citywide LF 12M CNG type and one atypical Scania Citywide II LF 11.5M CNG.

PRAHA

DPP Praha has a framework agreement for the supply of 70 3-door, 12.15 metre trolleybuses from Bozankaya, Turkey (Buses March 2025)

TABOR

Comett Plus, which provides urban transport in Tabor and regional routes is renewing its fleet with emission-free buses. 10 new Solaris Urbino 12 IV e buses have been running on city routes since January 2025; the remainder of city buses being CNG. The range is 230 kms. Meanwhile 6 Iveco Crossway LE Line 12M e buses are bring used on regional routes (Martin Harak)

DENMARK

All reports to Simon Brown, please, email simon.brown47@ntlworld.com He gathers news from Busfronten as his main source.

MOVIA

Denmark's largest public transport operator, has reached a significant milestone by electrifying 50% of its bus fleet in the capital region of Copenhagen and on Zealand. This achievement comes six years ahead of the original 2030 target set in 2020, demonstrating the accelerated pace of Denmark's transition to clean mobility.

With the addition of 66 new electric buses, Movia's fleet now includes 565 purely electric buses out of a total of 1,126 buses. This electrification represents over 51 million kilometres per year of emission-free travel, significantly reducing environmental impacts. Denmark's largest public transport operator, has reached a significant milestone by electrifying 50% of its bus fleet in the capital region of Copenhagen and on Zealand. This achievement comes six years ahead of the original 2030 target set in 2020, demonstrating the accelerated pace of Denmark's transition to clean mobility.

Movia operates 375 bus routes, of which 158 routes are already served exclusively by electric buses, covering over 51 million kilometres annually.

ECUADOR

QUITO

In January delivery began of 60 Yutong articulated trolleybuses. As a result the scrapping of 31 old trolleybuses began. Quito Mayor Pabel Muñoz said that only 20 of the old, 113-member fleet of articulated trolleybuses will remain in operation and another 5 will be preserved for museum purposes or a planned children's corner. He also said that the purchase of another 80 trolleybuses is being considered. (Československý Dopravák)

ESTONIA

TALLIN

TLT Tallin withdrew all its trolleybuses overnight on.31 October 2024. These were on routes 1,3,4 and 5. But tenders are now being invited for 40 new trolleybuses for delivery in 2026. The reason for their withdrawal was the poor condition of the vehicles and coming roadworks. (Buses Jan 2025)

FRANCE

The editor of Dossier Français is **Brian Rowney**. Send all reports relating to France or information to update our fleet records to 17 Humber Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester, M29 7HL, UK or e-mail bri.rowney@btinternet.com.

NATIONAL

Hardly news, since it occurred in May 2020, but an incident that your sub-editor became aware of while researching the former **Cars d'Orsay** fleet. The company lost most of its operations (including the main depot at Marcoussis) to RATP Cap Saclay in August 2022, and the remaining services passed to Francilité Express Ouest (Lacroix-SAVAG group) in January 2024.

Readers in the UK will know that, from time to time, double-deck buses are driven under railway bridges that are lower than they are, resulting in disruption to train services and, depending on the vehicle's age, the demise of the offending vehicle. Since 1920, all new overbridges must have a clearance of 16 ft 6 in (5.03 m), so such accidents should only occur at bridges that existed before that date. Not surprisingly, low bridge accidents involving buses occur less frequently in Europe, since double-deckers are much less common and there is a general height limit for road vehicles of 4 m.

However, low bridges do exist, and 10-year old Citaro 495 went into one during the evening peak. What made recovering from the accident particularly difficult was that the bus in question ran on CNG (compressed natural gas), and it was the equipment on the roof (fuel tanks and the protective covering) that hit the bridge. Fortunately, there was no gas leak, although the tanks appear to have been forced downwards, deforming the roof structure and causing the bus to be written off. Once it was established that there was no leakage, rail traffic on RER line B was allowed to resume for the rest of the day and the recovery process began after that. Before the wrecked bus could be moved, the gas bottles had to be emptied, one at a time, with the fire brigade in attendance throughout. This continued until 12.35 the following day, during which the train service between Orsay and Le Guichet was suspended because of the fire risk, with a replacement bus service in place.

The bridge clearance, according to photographs, was just 2.8 m, and the height of an early diesel Citaro is 3.095 m, or 3.13 m with optional air conditioning pack. The CNG bottles would have increased the vehicle height to 3.39 m. However, available photographs suggest that the actual clearance might have been more than the stated value, and it is possible that an ordinary Citaro would have just got through. Cars d'Orsay did operate both diesel and CNG Citaros, so it is not clear whether this was a scheduling error or the driver taking an unauthorised short-cut. (www.maligneb.fr, via tc-infos.fr)

Retrofits. The French government is offering financial help to operators to upgrade their vehicles, according to OTRE perhaps a subsidy of EUR 44,000 for a standard 12m vehicle. However, one retrofitter - Green Mot - is in trouble and is looking to share part of its business. With eight staff, turnover for 2024 was EUR 380,000 and a loss of EUR 518,000, although the company estimates EUR 110,000 profit on a turnover of EUR 5.8 million in 2025, and EUR 1.47 million profit on EUR 19.2 million turnover for 2026. (Autocar et Bus Infos, via Clive D'eath)

Safra, which has been making losses all through 2024, was placed in receivership (redressement judiciaire) on 4 February 2025. Known for producing face-lifts of Renault's PR100 and PR180 in the 1990s, the company has since launched the innovative (though somewhat unreliable) Businova, which was replaced by the Hycity (fuel cell) bus in 2023. Prior to the announcement, the company had been in talks with a Chinese consortium to bring in fresh investment. (Clive D'eath, France3-occitanie website)

Sales of buses and coaches (5 t and above, so including Iveco Daily and Mercedes Sprinter amongst others) in 2024 were almost 500 up on 2023 (6355, compared with 5860). Iveco (including Heuliez sold 95 more vehicles and remains the market leader, now with a little under 50% of sales. In second place was Daimler Bus (Evobus), though their total increased by 166 vehicles, while Temsa sales were 35% up, from 199 to 272. Bolloré Bluebus sales rocketed from 22 to 113, which may mean that their woes with the full-size Bluebus 12 are over. 272 vehicles are recorded as 'other' manufacturers, most of which (195) are Ford (Transit, presumably) with 31 Renault (Master?) and, surprisingly, two Alstom, despite the issues that most operators have had with the Aptis. The big loser was MAN-Neoplan, down to 437 from 598 in 2023, while Van Hool's sales were 40% down, though in this case dropping from 60 to 36. (Clive D'eath)

AMIENS

Keolis, the incumbent since 2019, will run Ametis for six more years from January 2025, and will generate an estimated income of EUR 245 million. The operation serves a population of 180,000, through 4 BRT routes, 14 local routes, 13 school routes and 8 demand responsive services. The fleet has 43 electric artics for the BRT services, 4 electric shuttles and 102 other vehicles, including 32 BioCNG. It is unclear what might be new, except that there is an intention to buy 40 new BioCNG buses over the term of the contract. (Clive D'eath)

BELFORT

On 2 January, a fire destroyed seven hydrogen buses at the Belfort Optymo depot. It is believed that a battery caught fire and spread to the closely parked vehicles. (Clive D'eath)

HÉRAULT

The Cap'Bus network covers the Agglo Hérault Mediterannée, including Agde and Pezenas. Keolis has held the operating contract since 2020, and has had its contract renewed for six and a half years from March 2025, with an estimated annual income of EUR 3.5 million. 19 vehicles run on five routes (increasing to seven in summer), plus a Transport on demand operation. There are difficulties in coping with 82,000 inhabitants in winter and 450,000 in summer. Over the duration of the contract, Cap'Bus intends to offer 24/7 services in summer (claimed to be the first for a French seaside resort), introduce open payment and a new visual identity. It also plans to change from B100 to HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), which is considered cleaner than its predecessor and is produced predominantly from vegetable oil and waste. (Keolis, via Clive D'eath)

LYON

At the end of 2025, the international Gare Routiere will move from its current location at Perrache to Gerland. There will be an interim period using part of the parking area of the Palais des Sports. Affected are the regional services and Bla Bla car and Flix bus. TCL replacement and TER remain at Perrache. (Clive D'eath)

MONTPELLIER

As many as 70 MAN Lion's City E are coming for the 'bus tram' project. The first is on display, with capacity for 83, and a range of 250 km. They will have low level windows along the whole of the sides, which is said to improve the luminosity. Low level windows have been an option with Iveco and Heuliez, but generally just on the offside, alongside the wheelchair bay (BAR). (Clive D'eath)

RÉUNION

La Réunion, one of the French overseas départements, has ordered 72 Crossway LE, to operate on the Car Jaune network. Delivery expected before the end of February (2025?). Most will be 13m vehicles with seats for 49, but nine will be 12m 45-seaters. (Clive D'eath)

SAVOIE

Autocars des Pays de Savoie (APS) have ordered the first two Iveco Crossway Elecs (displayed at Autocar Expo in Lyon in December.). They will be used on ProximiTi schools services in the Vallée d'Arve in September 2025. They will be 13 m long and with space for 63, they are described as "comfortable". (Autocar et Bus Infos, via Clive D'eath)

TARBES

The préfecture of the Hautes-Pyrénées département, Tarbes has a 22-strong bus fleet for the town service network both here and in Lourdes, contracted to Keolis TLP (= Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées). The lowest-numbered bus (58) is the most unusual, an Alstom Aptis whose presence may be explained by the Alstom factory in the town, albeit one dedicated to the rail industry. The rest of the fleet consists of MB Citaro 61/3, 74, 81-3/5 (85 is a hybrid) Citaro K 62/4 (62 is also a hybrid), Heuliez GX127 67-9, 75/6, Fiat Ducato/Dietrich 70/2, Renault Master 77, 84 and Bolloré Bluebus 6 78-80. Some of these vehicles are operated by subcontractors. The TLP network was launched in October 2020, combining the former Tarbes network (Alézan), the smallwer one at Lourdes (Mon Citybus) and the interurban service between the two towns. In December 2023, there were 14 services in Tarbes, three in Lourdes, the aforementioned interurban operation, an airport shuttle service and a demand-responsive operation, as well as two seasonal routes in Lourdes. This makes 22 services, operated by 22 vehicles! (Réseaux Urbains)

GERMANY

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BAD NAUHEIM, FLORSTADT & FRIEDBERG (BWW236)

A proper update from BWW149 was omitted from BWW236 for space reasons but is necessary for understanding what has gone on here. A Wetterauer Zeitung article about the first timetable change since 1996 caused by changes to DB train times at Bad Nauheim in 12/09 mentions the contract then existing running until 14/12/14. A picture of a VGO-liveried Volvo 8700 said to have been taken in Bad N on 11/11/14 has been found, but it shows "9 Bahnhof", not one of the four Bad N town routes. VGO is Verkehrsgesellschaft Oberhessen, the regional transport authority, not an operator. Routes FB-09/10 ("Friedberg-Bad N-Friedberg"), along with FB-02/16 (also serving Bad N) and FB-08 were the five routes mentioned under Florstadt in BWW149 as passing to Verkehrsgesellschaft Mittelhessen (VM) in 12/06, officially known as Linienbündel Friedberg. VM was an operator formed as a partnership of five existing operators in 12/03 – q.v. Weilburg below and for full details see Wikipedia article "Verkehrsgesellschaft Mittelhessen". Routes FB-01/03/04, all with one terminus at Friedberg but called Linienbündel Florstadt, passed to a partnership of Stroh of Altenstadt and Balser of Büdingen (14km E of Altenstadt) as also mentioned in BWW149 (88 issues on, we can now confirm these are two separate operators!)

On 1/11/13 VM was acquired by Transport Capital AG, understood to have been a British "bird of prey" attacking the German tendered-service market. It must have won a new contract effective 12/14, as per Wikipedia it announced in 6/16 that it would pull out of Friedberg on 11/12/16. Whether it lasted that long is unclear as it is said to have been "aufgelöst" on 4/1/17 – a rather speedy winding-up if it was still running three weeks earlier. VM must have been another source's unnamed operator which "withdrew from the Wetterau for economic reasons" in 2016. Per this source "a year later" Offenbach-based DeinBus Verkehrs-GmbH, "primarily a Fernbus specialist", was given a contract to work routes FB-10 and FB-30 to 36. (How FB-10 came to be linked with FB-02/08/09/16 in 2006 but with FB-30 to 36 in 2017 is a mystery too far to be solved here!)

DeinBus Verkehrs-GmbH filed for insolvency on 12/8/19 but must have continued in administration until 12/19. At some stage unpaid sub-contractors threatened to stop running, which would have affected school pupils in the west of the Kreis, but on 23/12/19 it was reported that Stroh would take over seamlessly from 1/20, absorbing vehicles and about 20 drivers from DeinBus. A firm called Ohly-Weber would continue as sub-contractor. Others implied by the plural in the previous sentence, if they existed, are not mentioned. We hope to deliver more news of successful operator Stroh under Altenstadt in a future issue. (Omnibusrevue, SV 9/2024, Wetterauer Zeitung, etc)

BERLIN (BWW236)

Ten Flixbus coaches are to advertise Berlin's museums in a deal with Staatliche Museen zu Berlin which will offer Flixbus travellers complimentary tickets for exhibitions on the city's Museum Island and other "cultural perks", apparently for one year in connection with the anniversary of something not mentioned! (CBW)

ESSLINGEN (BWW225)

SVE is a significant victim of the Van Hool collapse, having ordered no fewer than 34 18-metre and 12 12-metre A-series trolleybuses from VH which will now have to be sourced elsewhere after a new tendering process. But will it be able to afford them? See under Solingen below! (SV 3/2025)

FRIEDRICHSHAFEN & MANNHEIM (both BWW235), also DÜSSELDORF (BWW230)

Contrary to our expectations in BWW235, test operation of two eVersum 6.9m x 2.3m "self-driving" (SAE Level 4) 10-passenger "shuttles" began in Friedrichshafen on 28 October 2024, running to a set timetable 09.00-11.00 and 13.00-15.00 Mon-Fri, and was planned to end on 19 December. Until 22 November only a downtown section (ZF Forum – Albert-Schweitzer-Straße with five intermediate stops) was to be worked but from 25 November 25 the full 6-km route between the ZF Forum and the hospital (Klinikum) via Hochstraße and Schnetzenhausen church would be operated, taking about 25 minutes with termini. The vehicles were to run at up to 40 km/h in "urban settings" and 60 km/h in "rural areas". Further details of the exercise, including route map and both nearside and offside views of a RABus shuttle, can be found online in a UTM article dated 30 October 2024. Regarding the operation on the Franklin estate in Mannheim, we can only find references to it being due to start in October 2024, not that it actually did. However, a more recent article (not in UTM) states that the project has been running in both FN and MA since "autumn 2024" and has now been extended until summer 2025. One of the vehicles is registered FN-ZF 862 and Googling that registration turned up a picture on Instagram of it in Düsseldorf during an exhibition at the Messe called "Xponential Europe 2025" (18-20 February), where it was giving rides from car park P2 under Rheinbahn auspices. The Instagram poster calls it an eVersum MK-II 400. Both the extension of the RABus project and the identity of FN-ZF 862 were gleaned from a page on www.exponential-europe.com, but whilst it waffles about exhibition visitors having "the opportunity to experience future mobility firsthand with MIRA's teleoperated shuttle" it does not say that it would be the actual vehicle in the picture on it which would be offering that "experience"! The Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Transport is said to have subscribed €14 million to the RABus project, which seems a rather dubious use of public money in these straitened times unless much more use is made of the vehicles than an 8-week trial, 5 days a week, 4 hours a day. Who is paying for its continuation is not stated.

KARLSRUHE (BWW223)

Reference to "the new VBK electric bus depot" to be visited by participants in a conference held in November 2024 is made in a UTM article but details of it have proved elusive, apart from that it has 32 charging points and that not only buses but all VBK and AVG vehicles are maintained in its large workshop, which suggests that it is an extension of a tram depot. So far 12 39-seat MAN Lion's City 12E/NL326 (751-62), apparently delivered on 2 November 2023, are in service, scheduled to work routes 60, 62 and 70 since December 2023, alongside 53 diesel buses, all assorted M-B Citaro apart from the eight specially built Solaris Urbino 10.9 LE of 2015 (709-16). (UTM 5-11-24, VBK website, busphoto.eu)

KÕLN (BWW229)

KVB, with one of the largest e-bus fleets in Germany, opened the first part of Nordrhein-Westfalen's only purely e-bus depot to date on a 63,000-sq.m. former industrial site on Kaiserstrasse in Porz on 15 March 2024. When the second part opens in 2026 Porz will have an allocation of 180 e-buses, recharged via roof-mounted pantographs under gantries of chargers. Some power for them is generated photovoltaically on site. In March 2024 KVB's fleet of around 300 buses included 81 electrics in service and 12 being prepared for service, while 24 more were under construction at or about to be delivered from VDL's Roeselare factory in Belgium. A tendering process for another 46 was in progress. So far the whole e-bus fleet has come from VDL. On busphoto.eu are listed artics (all SLFA-181 Electric) 6001-8 (2015), 6009 (2018), 6010-53 (2021), 6054-64 (2022, possibly same batch as 6010-53), 6090-3 (2023-4) and 7020-4/6-44/6-52/4-63/5/6/8 (2023-4; 7020 built 2022, arrived 1/23) plus SLF-120 Electric 590-4 (2021), matching UTM's total of 117. We cannot explain the strange numbering, nor the fact that all except 6090-3 have E-suffix registrations but 6090-3 do not! A UTM article published only 20 days before the event records at some length the nomination of Porz e-bus depot for Nordrhein-Westfalen's Mobiltätspreis awarded on 12 December 2024. It is a pity the writer didn't wait until the outcome of the online vote by 5,000 people which only placed it third behind a Bürgerbus scheme in Lüdinghausen and a car park in Düsseldorf. We try to tell you what has happened, not just what might or might not happen! (UTM 25/3 & 22/11/24, busphoto.eu, Rheinische Post)

LEIPZIG (BWW234)

We last reported on LVB rather vaguely in BWW230, referring back to an even vaguer report in BWW222, and have never really reported the current situation comprehensively. OS 24-3 and 24-4 contain a two-part history of bus operations in the city from 1860 to recent times and the former also has a separate "Unternehmensporträt" covering the present and future, the three articles together containing 67 pictures but no list or description of today's 180-bus fleet. They have been published to mark the 120th anniversary of the first motor-bus operation in Leipzig, an apparently short-lived interurban route to Merseburg worked by a Stoewer bus in 1904.

MÜNSTER REGION (BWW165)

"SprinterBus" route S75 (Bocholt–Borken–Dülmen–A43 Autobahn–Münster) with an end-to-end journey time of 98 minutes, first introduced by DB subsidiary WestfalenBus about 30 years ago and more recently in the hands of SWK Fahrzeugservice GmbH, a Städtische Werke Krefeld subsidiary, has been worked by VDL double-deck coaches for a decade or so, firstly Synergy SDD-141/510 5521-4 of 2013 and then Futura FDD-141/510 (or FDD2-141/390?) 5525-7 of 2019. The route returned to WestfalenBus around the turn of 2023/4 and local firm Menchen (of Borken) acquired 5525/6 to work it as sub-contractor to WB, re-registering them BOR-BM 98/99. (5523/7 became Lensing of Borken BOR-L 7503/2 at the same time but for what purpose is unclear). WB then decided to take the route in-house and ordered three Setra S531DT with double-width centre doorway and an area adjacent to it for wheelchairs, etc. These new vehicles (MS-NV 740-2), which have 79 seats and two staircases, were exhibited in Borken bus station on 25 October 2024. They are in standard DB red livery. (UTM 11-11-24, busphoto.eu)

SOLINGEN (BWW236)

Thanks to the withdrawal of federal funding for electric bus projects since the end of 2023 and the insufficiency of Land and city funding to cover the cost of a planned further 38 battery-trolleybuses (over €1 million per bus) Stadtwerke Solingen has been compelled to reduce this intake of "BOB" to just 15 and to fall back on sourcing new diesel buses at around €300,000 each to replace existing diesels in 2026-30. This conflicts with the "Saubere-Fahrzeuge-Beschaffungs-Gesetz" (SFBZ, Clean Vehicles Procurement Law). Whether the proposal to buy new diesels is serious or just a ploy to force higher authorities to find more money is unclear. The city faces having to

SB50
Haan
MAN
7150

TOP: France. Paris 2886 is a Heuliez GX337 GNV at Gare Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 19/01/25. (Michal Dekánek)

MIDDLE: Germany. Rheinbahn MAN Lion's City 7150 and Solaris Urbino 8521 outside Dusseldorf Hauptbahnhof. (Colin Brazier)

BOTTOM: Germany. The Czech operator AKV Karlovy Vary operates three cross-border services into Germany. Here is its 214, a SOR CN12, in Oberwiesenthal on 15/02/25. (Jan Marek)

subsidise local public transport to the tune of €10.6 million in 2028/9 compared with an annual €4.5 million at present. (WDR)

TRIER (BWW236)

From one extreme to the other! Too late for BWW236 we found a website called Nahverkehr Region Trier (henceforth NRT) which not only contains a current SWT fleet list but a concise year-by-year list of all known Trier buses from Magirus 1/2 and Benz 3 of 1925 to the arrivals in 2020. This means 2025 is the centenary year of bus operation in Trier, although it is not clear from this source whether the tiny bus fleet of the 1920s soldiered on until trolleybuses 1-5 arrived in 1940 or how long a gap in motor-bus operation lasted before firmer beginnings in 1948. Further to BWW236, diesel Citaro artic 64-68 were new in 9/22, 69-72 in 7/23 and 73 in 9/23. Solo 140-3 and 144-7 were also new in 9/22 and 7/23 respectively. Electrics 101/2 were new in 12/22. On 19 September 2019 Stadtwerke Trier Verkehrs-GmbH signed a framework agreement with Daimler Truck for 90 Citaro over seven years to replace its whole fleet. The first four were supposed to arrive before the end of 2019 but must be 130-3 of 3/20. Previously SWT had taken three Sileo S12 e-buses, 197 in 2018 and 198/9 in 2019, but they were withdrawn in 2020, presumably returned to the manufacturer. It seems too much of a coincidence that three Sileo S12 are recorded by busphoto.eu as EGO, Ankara (TR), 22-197/8/9 and although shown as built 2021/2 we suspect that they are Trier 197-9 "recycled". SWT also borrowed an Irizar i2e 12m battery bus from Luxembourg operator Emile Weber in 2018-9 before putting its whole future in the hands of Daimler Truck. A 2016 M-B City Sprinter 65 minibus was acquired in 1/20 and numbered 196. The NRT website lists a vast number of operators present and past not only in Stadt Trier and Kreis Trier-Saarburg but also in Kreise Bernkastel-Wittlich, Bitburg-Prüm and Vulkaneifel but your Country Editor has not explored it any more deeply.

VÖLKLINGEN (BWW14, 43 & 82 only!)

Apparently off everybody's beaten track, this town W of Saarbrücken distinguished itself by introducing Saarland's first battery buses. UTM's 29-09-24 Saarlouis report cited in BWW236 mentioning "some" VDL Citea SLF120 electric entering service in VK in 2021 is wrong, but they were supposed to arrive by December 2021. Busphoto.eu dates such buses 1 and 6 to March 2022 (confirmed by an official source) and SLFA-180 electric 4 to September 2022. No newer buses have been found, but official announcements in 2023 of 15 (later 14!) more e-buses ordered quote a total e-bus fleet of 21 vehicles planned for 2025, suggesting that 6 or 7 e-buses existed already, numbered 1-6 or 1-7. Press items dated 11/6/23 and 8/9/23 quote totals of four and six respectively and another of 23/7/23 quotes five solo and one artic! From the last it appears that the discrepancy between 14 and 15 is accounted for by an M-B Sprinter e-minibus in addition to one artic and six solo MAN e-buses ordered after the 2023 summer holidays for delivery in each of 2024 and 2025. A 100% electric fleet of 35 buses is planned for no later than 2031. Previous new full-size buses were Solaris Urbino IV 12 17/18 of 2017 and 21 of 2018, plus Urbino IV 18 42 of 2018 and 43/44 of 2020. Interestingly 17, 18, 21 and 42 have VIN '1817-20, suggesting that they were all one order. Also new in 2020 was VDL Kusters Midcity 24, which followed similar minibus 10 of 2016. Völklinger Verkehrsbetriebe GmbH seems to have had an urgent need for an artic in 2019 as it added ex-Winterthur (CH) Solaris Urbino II 18 333 of 2002 to its fleet as no. 49 but it moved on in July 2020 and a 2007 M-B O530G became VVB 47 in September 2020. Another well-used Citaro G (of 2008) became no. 45 in September 2024. The fleet shown as current consists of 32 buses unfathomably numbered 1, 4, 6, 10-13, 15-18, 21-2/4-5/7-8, 30-37, 40-45 and 47. All but one have matching VK-VB 30xx registrations, the exception being MAN Lion's City A21/NL313 30 (VK-VV 30) of 2007, the last of several buses with VK-VV plates. VVB is a wholly owned subsidiary of Stadtwerke Völklingen Holding GmbH, formed in 2001. Withdrawn buses registered VK-S nn and VK-SW nn testify to a pre-2001 regime. (various sources via DMS)

WEILBURG (BWW212)

The business founded by Adolf and Martha Medenbach in Hirschhausen (6 km E oif Weilburg) as a haulage firm in 1935 introduced its first regular bus route (Weilburg–Wetzlar) in 1951. Managed by Lothar and Mathilde M from 1965, as a group of three GmbH it passed to Peter M after his father Lothar's death in 2003. From October 2003 until September 2008 Medenbach was involved in VM Verkehrsgesellschaft Mittelhessen GmbH with Peter M as MD of that company. After VM was sold to Abellio Peter returned full-time to the family business and set up Medenbach Traffic GmbH in October 2009 to resume local bus operation. Since then the new company has won and in subsequent tendering processes retained various bundles of routes in Landkreis Limburg-Weilburg and Lahn-Dill-Kreis contracted to it by Verkehrsgesellschaft Lahn-Dill-Weil (VLDW) and the Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund (RMV). Today its fleet of over 100 vehicles covers some 4 million km. annually,serving around 40 routes and 850 stops and employing 160 drivers. In course of delivery are 57 M-B Citaro mild hybrid (39 interurban, 13 artic and five short Citaro K) with a 14kW electric motor assisting pulling away which is supposed to reduce fuel consumption by up to 8.5%. Ten of them were to be placed in service in mid-December 2024 but as the handover at the Mannheim factory was only reported on 17 December it is unclear whether this actually happened. The company website contains a potted history ("Firmenchronik") and a page detailing vehicle types in its fleet (M-B Citaro G/K/LE, Setra S415/418LE business, Ford Transit minibus) but not telling how many of each are owned. Livery is all-over lime green. (www.medenbach-traffic.de, CBW)

GREECE

ATHENS

The Greek Ministry has announced a new tender for 125 e-buses for Athens. This is additional to an existing order for 250 Yutong e-buses in 2023 for Athens and Thessaloniki, of which 46 were delivered in 2024. (Sustainable Bus)

In recent years, the Greek capital has started the renewal of its bus fleet, which stopped in 2010 due to the debt crisis. After the delivery of 240 Yutong electric buses, Athens will welcome 300 vehicles powered by compressed natural gas (CNG) this year. Specifically, the fleet of the city operator OSY will be complemented by 200 Menarinibus Citymood 12 buses, together with a hundred articulated Iveco Urbanways, the first of which entered operation at the end of February this year. The remaining buses are to arrive during the year, in the second half of which all 200 Menarinibus vehicles should also be delivered. (Československý Dopravák)

GUATEMALA

GUATEMALA CITY

In March 2025, electric minibuses began operating in Zone 11 of Guatemala City, a transportation alternative for people who need to move to nearby points in this area, such as the Roosevelt Causeway and the Peripheral Ring. Electric buses also operate in Zones 10, 13, 14 and 16 of Guatemala City. In total there are four routes, including the one in Zone 11, the card and e-ticket that you buy in Zone 11 also works on these other buses. The Electric Minibuses are accessed by 5 doors along the nearside of the vehicle and are operated by Transportes Electricos de Guatemala. (Wayne Doran)

HUNGARY

Items compiled from Magyarbusz by **Mike Power** unless otherwise indicated.

NATIONAL

Credobus has announced the Electronell artic e bus, claiming it is the lightest steel-framed e bus in the world. Its 12 metre e bus was presented in summer 2024. The other Hungarian manufacturer, Ikarus, announced in late 2023 that its artic bus, the Ikarus 180e would join its range soon.(BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

INDIA

Malcolm Chase (MGC) is the news gatherer for India, please email mandvchase@gmail.com. The news here is arranged by states.

NATIONAL

The number of buses operated by the State Road Transport Undertakings, SRTUs, fell from 152,000 to 147,000 from 2018/9 to 2021/22, while revenue losses surged by 68% (in 2025 this seems remarkably out of date). The main reason is the Covid 19 period. Post pandemic there has been some recovery, but all SRTUs except Uttar Pradesh SRTC and Gujarat SRTC continue to make losses. Reasons for losses now are no fare increase, lack of fuel price cuts and SRTUs being "forced" to offer free rides to women. (Times 20-2-25)

Nearly 60,000 buses were registered in India in 2024. Ashok Leyland took first place with 18,215, a 37.8% market share with Tata close behind with 15,077, a 31.3% share.. VE Commercial Vehicles, a joint venture of Volvo and Eicher, came 3rd with 8297 buses, a 17.4% market share. SMLIsuzu and Daimler India had registrations of 1602 and 1377 buses, while various electric bus makers, as well as Force and Mahindra & Mahindra, had much smaller shares. Among electric bus makers the leader was Tata with 1431 buses, a 40% market share, then came Olectra Greentech with 630, 17.7%, JBM Auto 556, 15.6%, PMI Electro Mobility Solutions 529, 14.8% and others with smaller shares. .PMI says it has delivered 2000 + buses to 31 different cities in India. (Sustainable Bus Feb 2025)

JBM has received an order for 1021 e buses costing Rs 5500 crore (c £ 606 million) under the PM E-Bus Sewa Scheme-2. These are for Gujarat, Maharashtra and Haryana, but no split of numbers is given. JBM says it has established the biggest integrated e bus manufacturing facility in the world, outside China. The factory is in Haryana state, near Delhi. (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

BYD has signed an order for 2000 ebuses with its partner, Olectra Greentech. (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025). But this does not help much with the destination of these buses, ed.

NueGo coach operator was launched in 2022.It now has 250 electric coaches with 450 daily departures. Described as NueGo by Green Cell Mobility it has now launched a further 6 new routes, including Gurgaon-Noida-Dehra Dun, Noida to Chandigarh, Coimbatore to Madurai and Bangalore to both Mysore and Vellore...In October it achieved a national and Asian record for an electric bus, by travelling from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari (Cape Cormorin), 4039 kms via 200 cities and towns in 14 days (4-18 October 2024). The make of bus is not stated (Mobility Outlook)

Flixbus and ETO Motors intend to deploy 4 e coaches by March, route not stated. ETO Motors is "an electric fleet operator". (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

ASSAM

A deadline of 15 December has been set for 10 more city routes, ASTC and private, to have colour coded buses. !5 routes already have these strips. The colour must be displayed on all four sides of each bus in two long rectangular strips, start point on top strip, terminus on lower strip. (Hindu 8-12-24)

New electric buses and a new mini bus station, ISBT, were inaugurated by the Chief Minister in Gauwahati on 1 January 2025.. 56 e buses were added to the ASTC fleet, in addition to the 200 introduced on 1 January 2024, making the total 256, in addition to 100 CNG buses bought in 2023. There would be another 100 e buses making the city fleet 100% green by 2026. Diesel buses would be re-directed to district routes. The new mini ISBT at Khanapara would serve upper Assam and 6 neighbouring states, complementing the existing ISBT at Betkuchi. (Hindu 2-1-25)

CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh Transport Undertaking, CTU. 60 new buses were flagged off yesterday. The plan is to make the CTU 100 % electric by 2026/27., with 100 new buses to come under the PM E-Bus scheme. (Hindu 16-1-25)

CTU has made losses of Rs 1.27 crore because of vacant shops in the two ISBTs, 11 in Sector 17 and 8 in Sector 43. (Hindustan Times 6-1-25)

GOA

Kadamba Transport Corporation, KTC, has introduced a smartcard which will give a 10% reduction in fares. (Times 20-12-24)

GUJARAT

Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service, AMTS, is to add 225 electric buses in 2025/26, including 60 a/c and 60 mini a/c. A further loss of Rs 400 Crore is predicted, while the fleet total is about 1113 buses. Other plans include 800 stainless steel smart bus shelters and 300 mini shelters. (Times 15-1-25)

HARYANA

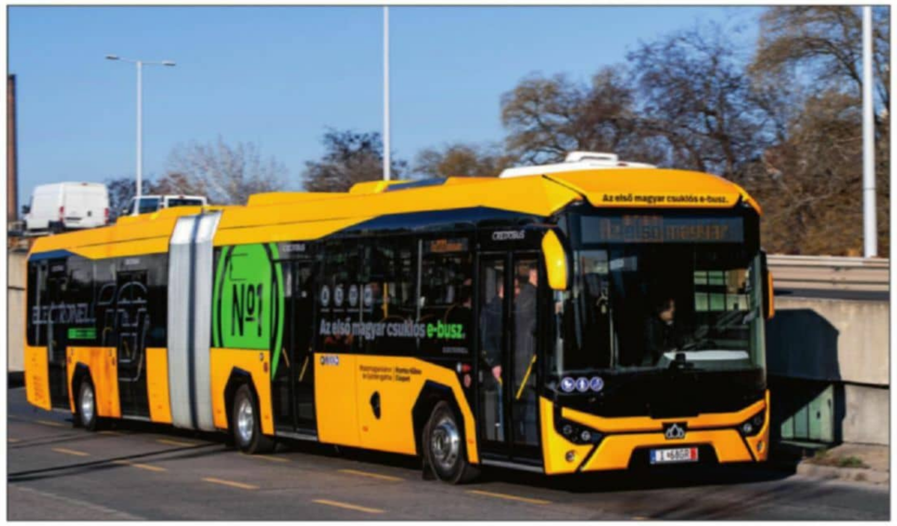
The Transport Minister has announced that Haryana's public transport system is set for a major overhaul, with significant upgrades in bus services, infrastructure and road safety. Haryana Roadways will gradually replace its ageing fleet of buses, while bus terminals across the State will also undergo major renovations. (Times 5-3-25)

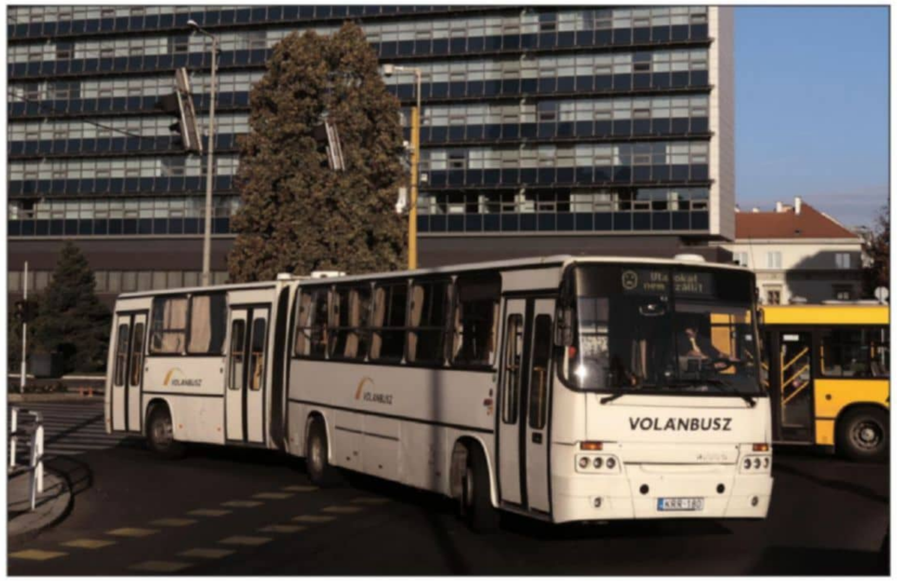
HIMACHAL PRADESH

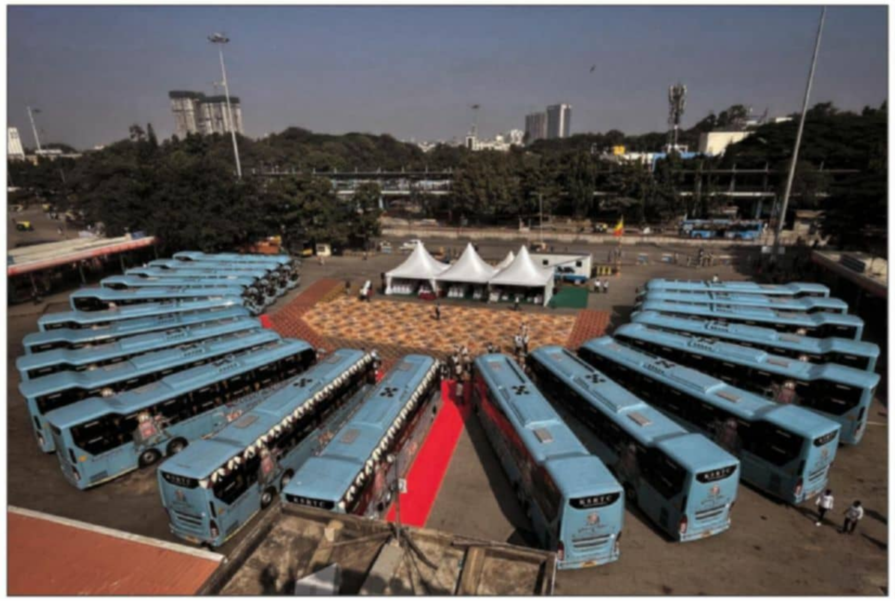
HRTC is accused of operating 50 buses illegally from the two ISBTs in Sector 17 and 43 in Chandigarh, while 65 are running legally. (Times Jan 2025) Presumably HRTC is accused of taking local passengers from CTU, ed mgc.

KARNATAKA

Bengaluru BMTC is to start introducing the first of 320 new a/c e buses in January 2025 on the route Majestic to KIA airport. These will be the first a/c electrics. A photo shows a blue Tata. The existing Volvos will be re-deployed. A photo in January shows a blue Switch bus supplied by OHM Global Mobility, KA 51 AK 8874, one of the first 5 deployed. (Hindu 8-12-24 and 18-1-25)







TOP: Hungary. The Credobus Electronell 18 prototype due to enter trial service this year. (Credobus)

MIDDLE: Hungary. Volanbusz KRR-180, an Ikarus C80-30A on 28-10-24. (Jan Marek)

BOTTOM: India. On 25th December Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) rolled out 20 new Volvo BS VI 9600 multi-axle 'Ambaari Utsav" AC Sleeper Buses at Bengaluru. (KSRTC)

BMTC is to introduce full-bus advertising wraps for the first time, to bring in revenue of Rs 3000 Crore per month. It has 6158 buses of which 1027 electric and 3000 non a/c. Only the latter will have the full wraps. (Hindu 27-1-25)

The big Kempegowda bus station in Bangalore, still known by most as Majestic, is being refurbished, the first time in 10 years. The BMTC part is the big semi-circular station you can see on postcards. (Times 5-2-25)

KaSRTC has launched a tranche of 20 new Ambaari Utsav sleeper coaches, bringing the total to 40. The 15 metre 3 axle light blue coaches have 40 sleeper berths. (Hindu 28-12-24)

KaSRTC opened a new bus station in Peenya in 2014 at a cost of Rs 40 Crore to take 140 schedules diverted from the main Kempegowda (Majestic) bus terminal, but it never worked and is now to be converted into a shopping complex.(Hindu 4-1-25)

The Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation, KSTDC, has re-introduced package tours with a tour to Tirupati. (Hindu 24-1-25)

KERALA

KeSRTC has 5523 buses of which 444 are under the Swift brand. But 1194 are over 15 years old and only 2300 have insurance cover, of which 1902 have 3rd party cover only. (Hindu 9-12-24)

The salary crisis is over. In future KeSRTC employees will be paid on the 1st day of each month, with a Government subsidy. (Times 5-3-25)

Kochi Metro Rail Ltd, KMRL,has received the first 15 of its Metro Connect feeder buses referred to in BWW 236. They are turquoise Eicher 33 seat two-door a/c e buses. While fares will start at Rs 20 for up to 5 kms, those connecting metro stations with the airport route will have a fare of Rs 80. (Hindu 11-1-25)

Kochi.After decades old demand at last buses from Vypeen are being allowed to go right through Ernakulam to Vyttila, having fprmerly had to terminate at High Court. A private bus route of Thejaswini is to start now. (Hindu 23-1-25)

MADHYA PRADESH

The State Government dismantled the BRTS in Bhopal a year ago and that worsened transport in that city. Now there is chaos and no unified ticket system. (Times 7-1-25)

Better news here now. The State is to buy 552 electric buses under the PPP model, to be spread over 6 cities, Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Ujjain and Sagar.. Bhopal City Link Ltd is struggling – it will get 100 e buses. The Bhopal Metro is expected to start by July 2025. Indore is expected to receive 150 a/c e buses under the PM E Bus Sewa Scheme. (Times 8-2-25, etc)

MAHARASHTRA

BEST has proposed its budget, without any fare increase. Yet it expects a loss of Rs 2132 Crore in 2025/26, Rs 9286 Crore cumulative and still aims to increase the number of buses to 10182 by March 2026. The loss relates entirely to buses: electricity breaks even. (Times 6-12-24).

BEST now says it expects to have 8000 e buses by 2027, having placed an order for 3150 e buses of which 500 would have air conditioning. It is not clear, says BB, if this total includes the orders for 2100 in 5/22 and /or the 2400 ordered in 2/24, both with Olectra Greentech.. BEST also plans to commission 1200 new double-deck e buses. The difficulty is that only 160 of the order for 2100 have been delivered and only 50 of the 200 d-ds ordered. (Busworld Business 13-12-24., quoting several sources)

BEST has now been given Rs 1250 Crore for new buses in 2025/26, including 250 electric buses. But an official says this is inadequate in view of the loss being incurred. (Times 5-2-25)

Transport analysts are urging BEST to buy CNG buses as they are much cheaper than e buses and BEST has the facility to fuel 4000 CNG buses, which is currently under-used. (Times 22-2-25)

MSRTC has increased all fares by 15%, the first rise since 2021.(Times 25-1-25)

It has around 14300 buses, of which nearly 10,000 are more than 10 years old so will be phased out in next 3-4 years. It has been announced that it will buy 25,000 "Lalpari" buses in next 5 years at 5,000 per annum. It turns out that these Lalpari buses will be diesel non a/c buses built by Ashok Leyland in Tamil Nadu, with special features to help air flow. (Times, Hindustan Times 30-1-25)

MSRTC will not after all refurbish Swargate bus terminal in Pune (BWW 236) as it wants to wait for the State to build e new multi-modal terminus instead like it is doing now at Shivajinagar.(Times 19-2-25)

MSRTC is losing Rs 3 crore every day because of 50% concessions to women and OAPs, according to the Transport Minister . The Opposition has repeatedly accused the Government of pushing public utilities into financial difficulties because of populist measures. (Times 22-2-25).

All MSRTC bus services to Karnataka were suspended on 22 February after pro Kannada activists attacked a bus and a KaSRTC driver was assaulted for not understanding Marathi. There are 250 buses across the state border, with 600 journeys daily suspended. Private buses are still crossing. (Times 24-2-25).

All services to resume on 27 February but KaSRTC have lost Rs 40 lakh during the 4 days suspension. (Hindu 27-2-25)

Nashik's municipal bus service, NMPM Ltd, is running with losses of nearly 50% of its costs. It is seeking subsidy as in Mumbai or Pune. It has about 240 buses. (Times 9-12-24)

Thane Municipal Transport, TMT, is to get 100 a/c e buses by April under the "PM e bus scheme". 60 would be 9 metres long, 40 12 metres (Times 7-2-25). According to Wikipedia TMT, founded on 9 February 1989, has 504 buses running 117 routes from 5 depots. As well as Thane local routes, it also runs to Navi Mumbai , Mira Bhayandar, etc

PMPML Pune has had another bad year with 15,700 breakdowns. Officials attribute this to 45% of its fleet of 1880 buses being over 10 years old. (Times 30-12-24)

MANIPUR

Manipur MSRTC was liquidated in 2003, after which only private buses ran in the State. State buses were re-started under the name Manipur State Transport. Recently MST tried to start bus routes from Imphal to Senapati and to Churuchandur, but they ran empty. The problem is the clashes between the Meitei and the Kuki. Senapati is a Naga-dominated area, while other areas are Kuki or Meitei majority areas. Other bus routes are no doubt running, but a list of routes cannot be found – photos show a Tata heading to Burma/Myanmar and a Tata/Marco Polo heading to Jessani. (Times, Hindustan Times, web Dec 2024)

ODISHA

OSRTC Some 14 a/c buses received under the LAccMI scheme (see BWW233) are sitting unused at the main depot while route permits are awaited. 50 non a/c buses received under the scheme have been put into service. Locals in Odisha are complaining. (Times 20-1-25)

PUDUCHERRY

Bus fares are to rise for the first time since 2018 (Hindu 23-12-24)

PRTC is to aim for an all-electric fleet by the end of 2024. But this will only apply to local routes and not Inter-State routes. (Hindu 11-2-25)

PUNJAB

Jalandhar. The AAP political party has promised 100 e buses in Jalandhar if it wins the municipal election. (Times 15-12-24)

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan RSRTC has requested a substantial fare increase, the first since 2016. (Times 25-1-25)

TAMIL NADU

The Transport Minister says that of 8,000 new buses planned, 3,000 have already been launched and the remaining 5,000 would be bought soon. (Hindu 23-2-25). I cannot identify these numbers, ed MGC.

Chennai is to have a new strategy for bus stops. The plan is to create new parking spaces near bus stops, adopting a standard design for bus stop, footpath and parking spaces to promote intermediate public transport such as share autos, cabs and auto rickshaws. This will improve "last mile connectivity" (Hindu 8-12-24). Maybe this concept could be applied elsewhere – what about Kolkata?-ed

A report says that the accumulated losses of the RTCs in TN have doubled from Rs 24718Cr to Rs 48718 Cr by 2022.. More than 1000 buses are discarded annually, with only one-third replaced. The age of buses causes rising maintenance costs and many buses off the roads for lack of spare parts. (Times 11-12-24)

TNSTC -all buses are to have GPS devices installed as part of a modernisation drive. (Hindu 30-12-24)

MTC has introduced the Singara Chennai Travel Card for seamless and cashless public transport travel. It could be used throughout the country - a card is titled SBI and RuPay Initially 50,000 cards will be issued free by State Bank of India. MTC's ETMs have already been upgraded to accept them and for them to be re-charged. (Hindu, Times 7-1-25). MTC is also to introduce premium buses on certain routes. (Hindu 31-1-25)

MTC is to expand its fleet for the first time in 15 years, according to the Hindu, with 600 electric buses next month and 650 more next year, taking the fleet size to 4500. But the Union urban affairs minister recommends that a city has 60 buses per lakh (100,000) of population, which would require MTC to have 7200 buses. These new electric buses will operate under the "gross cost contract" model, with MTC paying private operators a fixed rate per km while retaining fare collection revenue. MTC has already started revamping depots to set up charging infrastructure, such as Chennai Central (Palavan Salai). The new buses will run on key routes like 19, 91, 21G and 570. 900 diesel buses were phased out in the last 2 years. (Times 12-2-25)

There is a plan to introduce more minibuses in rural areas around Trichy on routes not currently served by State or private buses. 30 possible routes are being looked at. At present there are 110 minibuses in Trichy district. (Times 8-2-25)

The RTO in Madurai has identified 41 new minibus routes in Madurai District to ensure connectivity to 65% of areas without public transport. 250 routes have permits but only 50-60 are still running. Minibuses were successful from 1998 to 2009, but then shared autos entered the scene. Now, with a fare of Rs 10 and declining passengers, most routes are no longer viable. (Times 12-2-25)

72 new routes have been identified for minibuses in Chennai (Hindu 5-3-25)

Funds are being made available to convert 1000 State buses from diesel to CNG, including 200 MTC buses. (Hindu 2-3-25)

TELANGANA

TGSRTC is to press the Central Government for help in converting its entire fleet to electric buses. Meanwhile the unions are protesting about the decision to buy 3,000 electric buses to be run on the "gross cost contract" basis as that may lead to job losses. (Hindu 17 and 24-1-25)

UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand UTC. The re-implementation of GRAP IV guidelines has led to the suspension of 27 Super Luxury Deluxe Volvo BSIV buses. The UTC fleet still has 130 ordinary BSVI and 12 Volvo BSVI buses on the Delhi-Dehra Dun route while it also has 190 BSVI buses between Delhi and other stations in Uttarakhand. (Times 20-12-24)

UTTAR PRADESH

Varanasi City Transport Service Ltd, a Government operation, was incorporated on 15 June 2010. It is to extend its e bus service. It turns out that similarly titled city bus services also exist, eg, Agra-Mathura, Allahabad and Kanpur but your editor could not get their websites to load. (Times 15-12-24)

UPSRTC is to buy more buses to augment its fleet of 12,300, which includes 270 e buses. 21 e buses and 2 Switch double-deckers have already been delivered. (BWW 236, Times 5-2-25)

It is to buy 1621 buses (and 42 trucks) from Eicher Trucks and Buses. These will be 1,344 non a/c Skyline PRO 3011L and 3010L, 197 a/c PRO 6016 12 metre and 80 PRO 6016 CNG "Bus cowl chassis". (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

WEST BENGAL

Over 2,000 buses have gone off the road in Kolkata and Howrah in 2024 with only 150 new ones. Private owners of the blue and yellow buses say they cannot afford to buy new ones and the WBSTC has no buses spare to replace them. New (high-floor) buses cost Rs18 lakh for the chassis, Rs 6 lakh for the body and Rs 1 lakh for documentation. Long routes such as 230, 235 and 239 have over 35 buses each, but hardly any have BSVI engines. The iconic maroon and yellow minibuses (more like midibuses to our eyes) are also on their last legs with only 10% of 1900 likely to be in use by autumn. Some people say that routes should be rationalised. (Times 4-1-25)

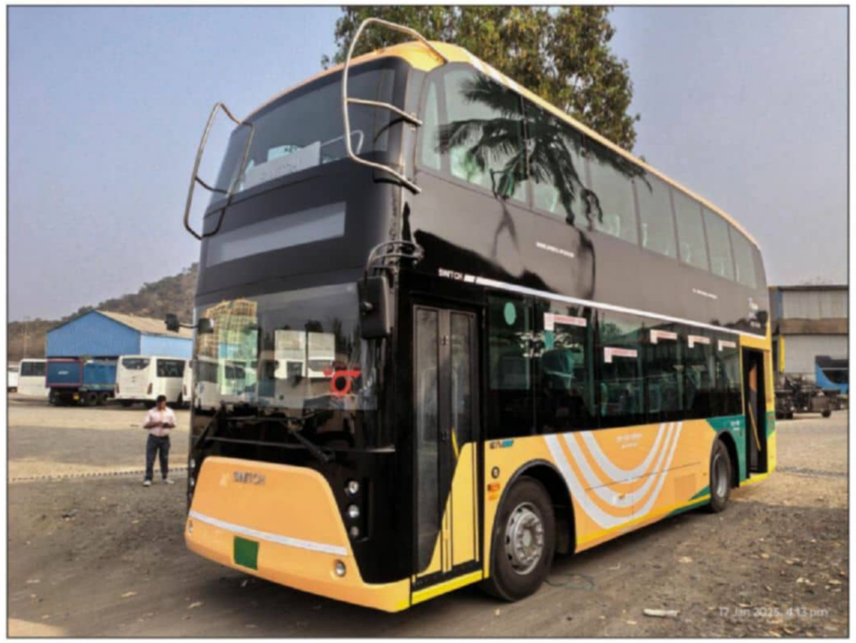
After a prod from the Chief Minister, the Transport Dept, ie WBTC, will increase its fleet from 550 to 640, enabling more routes and increased frequency on other routes. (Times 5-1-25)

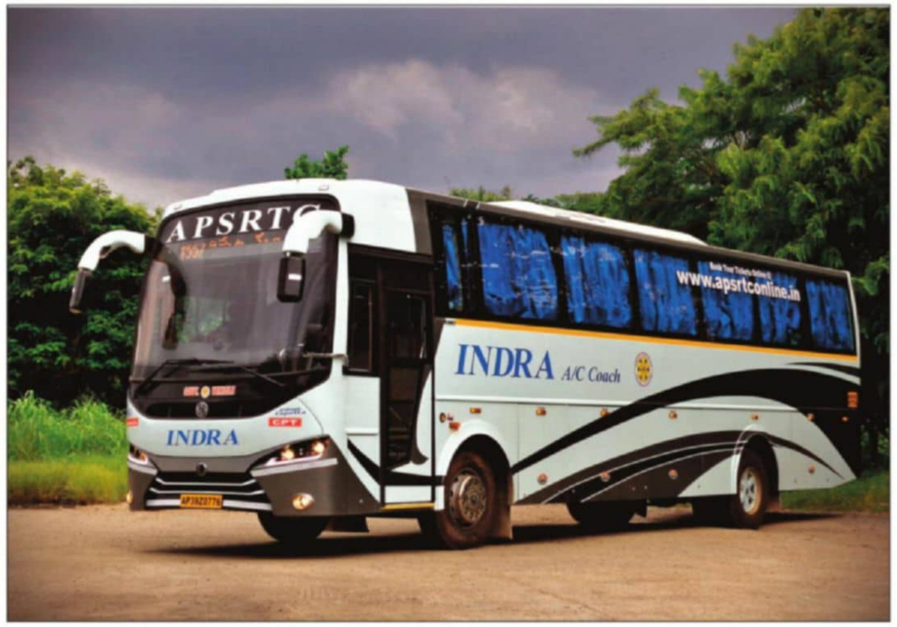
Now WBTC has ordered 6 new Volvo 9600 B8R a/c buses for early delivery to help with Kolkata's increasingly unbearable summers. (Times 5-3-25)

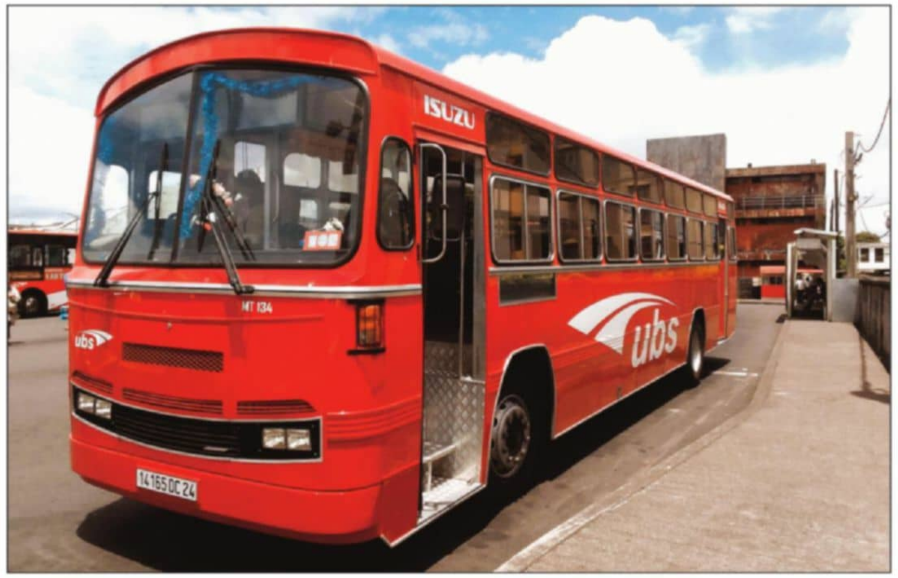
Trams. Whatever the Government wants, there was a "tram" weekend in Kolkata, with hundreds of enthusiasts lining the remaining routes and 200 schoolchildren being carried on special trams. (Hindu 11-1-25).

The Calcutta Tram Users Association has welcomed a High Court decision that bitumenised tram tracks must be restored. (Hindu 16-1-25)

The 10 year old plans for a multi-modal hub at Esplanade have been dusted down. Three metro lines converge there and the plan is to put all intra-state buses underground while trams remain on the surface. Minibuses may remain passing through as they do at Dalhousie. (Times 19-2-25)







TOP: India. Delivered in January was this yet to be registered Switch Mobility double-decker for UPSRTC. (UPSRTC)

MIDDLE: India. An INDRA AC coach of APSRTC allocated to Chilakaluripet depot. AP39Z 0776 is an Ashok Leyland with Prakash Coach Builders Capella bodywork. (Revant Choudhary)

BOTTOM: Mauritius. Seen in December the latest bus in the UBS fleet is Isuzu-based MT134. (Oliver Doyle)

TOP: Mauritius. 8812AG23 is a new Isuzu NPR based bus at Curepipe Metro station in December. (Oliver Doyle)

MIDDLE: Italy. Genova 2211, a Solaris Trollino IV 18-Skoda, being tested in Plzen, Czechia on 22/01/25. (Martin Harák)

BOTTOM: Italy. Still in pristine condition, two Higer minibuses before entering service with ANM Napoli. (ANM Napoli)

So there is still time to go and see it all on the surface, ed MGC

ITALY

Please send news reports to **Mike Power** at postierla@hotmail.co.uk
Regular sources include Autobusweb, Clickmobility, Ferpress and Odissea Quotidiano.

NATIONAL

As predicted in BWW233/4, **central government funding** for all metro, tram, trolleybus and BRT schemes has been withdrawn in the 2025 spending plan and diverted to favoured projects, principally the proposed bridge over the Strait of Messina to Sicily. The Rapid Mass Transit Improvement Fund set up under law 232/2016 aimed at reducing private traffic by 10% by funding 96 km of tram and metro routes and 135 km of trolleybuses / BRT has effectively been closed. Expenditure on the bridge, still at the design stage, has now already been allocated over EUR13 billion, some EUR 3 billion having been diverted from the Improvement Fund. A wider examination of the government's actions is at https://www.legambiente.it/news-storie/il-trasporto-pubblico-italiano-tra-finanziamenti-inadeguati-crisi-climatica-e-disservizi/ produced by the Legambiente green lobby group.

At a press conference in late January attended by the Minister of Enterprise, the new owners of **Menarini** confirmed the restructuring of the company will continue through 2025; the partnership with the Geely group is expected to be concluded by August. In 2023, the company completed just 55 buses, rising to 285 in 2024, and aiming for 400 in 2025, including large orders for EAV, Air Campania and Athens (Greece). Geely will introduce 6 and 8 metre electric midibuses which will be branded as Menarinibus for both the Italian and foreign markets.

The Chinese **Alfabus** still has its European HQ in Modena despite having supplied no buses in Italy since a couple found themselves in Cremona before the pandemic, but has supplied 130 buses to Spain and intends to be present at Busworld Brussels in October.

In 2023 Milano city council launched the "**Casa ai Lavoratori**" project allocating over 300 homes owned by the municipality for workers, aimed at principally younger or lower paid staff. ATM Milano has now been assigned 30 of these apartments as part of its work to overcome staff shortages. https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/casa/progetti/progetto-casa-ai-lavoratori . Bologna has also initiated a similar project in association with Tper. Amendments to the Italian Highway Code at the end of 2024 included reducing the age to hold a bus drivers licence from 21 to 18. An additional provision of the Code is withdrawing the ban on local bus operators using rented vehicles, thus reducing the demand for capital, and overturning moves originally aimed to inhibit the development of Flixbus.

Politecnico Milano recently published (in Italian) for the operators' group **ANAV** an analysis of the methods, costs and impacts of bus fleets moving from diesel to greener fuels – the link is https://www.anav.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/studioanavcoppolafabis-19102024.pdf .

Following investigations at **Lampugnano coach station** in Milano, staff from several contracting operators for Flixbus and BlaBlaBus have been found accepting bribes of hundreds of euros for helping illegal immigrants reach France and Switzerland; 7 people have been arrested. The scam is said to be common knowledge among migrants from north Africa.

A recently published study by **Checkmybus** shows how the popularity of middle-distance journeys has greatly increased in recent years and prices continue to fall on some routes – see https://www.checkmybus.it/service/stampa/mercato-autobus-analisi-dati

ABRUZZO

Existing contracts for the provision of public transport have been extended by 12 months to December 2025. The city council in L'Aquila has reached agreement with central government that EUR6.5 million unspent for more than 10 years from the doomed Translohr project can be used towards funding 6 electric buses for a 6.5 km Metrobus line between Collemaggio (central bus terminal) and San Salvatore hospital with a branch to the rail station. The frequency would be 4 per hour to both Hospital and station. The plan is short of a full BRT scheme but includes eg. traffic light priority, junction improvements etc. A summary of the demise of the old Translohr scheme can be found at http://www.6aprile.it/featured/2013/09/03/laquila-metro-di-superficie-al-via-petizione-per-smantellarne-i-resti.html (ANSA)

The latest proposal for the Pescara trolleybuses is that although the vehicles are now reported to be ready, to overcome some continuing public opposition a service could start in March 2025 using electric buses from TUA's fleet. A You Tube video of one of the trolleybuses on test can is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbg_r1A0D-4 . Readers are reminded that the original funding for the trolleybus project of 60 billion Italian lire (about EUR 32 million) was granted in 1995!

BOLOGNA

The hydrogen Solaris 12 for Tper have commenced delivery; there will be 60 3-door for urban work, and 67 2-door for suburban routes, with some buses based in Ferrara. Price increases took effect on 1 March with a single fare rising from EUR 1.50 to 2.30; there is some disquiet at the size of the increase though multi-journey tickets have less steep increases. Car parking charges rose at the same time and these rates are expected to be held for at least 4 years.

BOLZANO

SASA have 9 e-Citaro artics for uses on routes 131 and 201.

CALABRIA

Autolinee Romano based in Crotone has 30 Citaro and Intouro hybrids replacing its entire fleet on urban service and the older EuroIII interurbans. Eighty percent of the funding came from EU grants administered by the region which will cover the cost of a further 20 buses for later delivery. In Cosenza, local operator AMACO is in the process of liquidation. Buses and staff have been transferred to a new consortium until December 2026.

CAMPANIA

Some of the former CTP Trollinos have turned up in Budapest – reports vary between 2 and 8 (of the 10 owned by CTP). The region has ordered 50 8-metre Karsan e-ATAK electric buses for delivery before the end of 2025 – there is no indication which operators they will go to.

EMILIA ROMAGNA

The region is the latest to take part in the Digital Transformation programme of the Mobility as a Service app (BWW 235/6) and 2500 residents were signed up in March for the latest trial. The city council in Parma is developing an 8 km north-south BRT route (here referred to as TRM – Trasporto Rapido di Massa) between the city centre and the University, 70% to be on reserved carriageway and served by artic trolleybus every 5 minutes. In Faenza, the local council is meeting the full cost of local routes 1 – 3 for the second year, meaning that local bus services are free to users in 2025. In Rimini, the two proposed extensions of the Riccione rapid transit corridor have been awarded central government funding of EUR150 million. An unusual accident occurred when a SETA bus crashed into a shelter at the Mediopadana highspeed train station (by the A1 autostrada close to Reggio Emilia); the roof-mounted methane cylinder exploded and caused many bus windows to implode, fortunately without causing serious injuries.

LAZIO

The first 10 of the 58 Iveco Crossways diesels for the Jubilee services (BWW236) arrived before Christmas. However the S group of routes (BWW235) have been cancelled.

MILANO

Six (of the original 10) Iveco Citelis trolleybuses have been put on sale. At 20 years old they are life expired with 180k km service.

MOLISE

The Regional President is proposing to establish an in-house company directly owned by the regional administration, allowing the region to assign public transport services without tendering, quoting the city of Roma as an example. (Quotidiano del Molise)

NAPOLI

Further to BWW 235, the first 70 of the 258 electric buses were expected to be ready to enter service in February, subject to work on the charging facilities in depots Cavalleggeri d'Aosta and via delle Puglie being completed. Route allocations are expected to be: route C68 – Higar minibuses; C16 – Zonson; C63 – Iveco; 139, 151 and 196 – BYD. At the time of writing the Zonson and Iveco were in course of delivery. Outline transport plans to 2030 seeking government funding of EUR2.5 billion are heavily rail dependent, including new metro lines and even two monorails, but also envisage the purchase of 40 new trolleybuses. (Napoli fanpage)

PIEMONTE

Four Yutong E9's entered service with AMAG Alessandria in February, with another 5 to follow along with 12 Otokar electrics. The aim is to have only electric and methane buses by the end of 2025.

PUGLIA

The region has added an extra EUR14 million towards the cost of the BRT schemes in Bari and Taranto. More details of the Taranto scheme have been publicised – 2 routes with a total distance of 40 km, 66 new electric buses and a peak hour frequency of up to 24 buses per hour, commencing in 2026.

ROMA

Further to the comment in BWW235, tram 19 was only partially restored after the mayor objected to the tram entering a pedestrian area (described by him as the "urban living room") on Via Ottoviani which immediately calls into question plans already agreed for new tram developments around Piazza Risorgimento, an apparent reversal of policy, with two branches of the proposed new tram lines likely to be dropped. The proposed fare increase has been deferred thanks to an increase in funding of EUR 10 million from the Lazio region. At the same time ATAC's contract with the city council was approved for a further 3 years at a cost of EUR 1 billion, with an option to extend by 18 months (until 2029) provided performance conditions were met. ATAC has confirmed the option to purchase a further 78 Solaris Urbino 12 (BWW235) using government sourced funds. The first 20 Iveco electrics were due to enter service as this report was prepared – initially they will be used on routes H, 46, 51, 62, 64 and 75. Recent deliveries saw the end of the Citaro C1 class dating from 2003-4 (fleet nos 8101 – 8201) and the last of ATAC's Euro III fleet, while Roma TPL fleet has 30 King Long E12 and 15 King Long E10. The handover of the Roma TPL contract to the new operators (BWW235) actually occurred on 26 October, but by Christmas, staff were still awaiting their October salary as well as subsequent payments including holiday pay. However dissatisfaction with the SAP/Tuscia consortium operating the west tranche has resulted in 4 routes being withdrawn and awarded to the second best tenderer, Miccolis, who is now recruiting.

Lines 72 and 73 in the Tregoria area south of the city are to be converted to trolleybus operation this spring using the existing fleet of Breda trolleybuses. However, little of the routes is covered by wires and the vehicles will spend most of their time using their auxiliary diesel motors.

At Fiumicino Airport, the contract for shuttle buses to parking and hotel sites moved from Trotta to Schiaffini, who brought in a new fleet of 10 BYD K9UD buses for the services.

The group that encouraged Cotral to preserve older buses (BWW235) have approached ATAC to offer their experience with a planned similar project at the San Paolo depot, currently no longer an active depot but home to the training school. And finally, increasing disruption caused by bad parking should be reduced after a fleet of 40 tow trucks is now on call to remove offending vehicles.

SAN MARINO

Making a rare appearance in this column, buses are operated by AASS, a state owned company which provides a number of services from gas and electricity to a public slaughterhouse. The newest buses are 2 Citaros bought in 2021 and the fleet of 13 includes 4 Breda Menarini new in 2002 and bought second hand from Trieste in 2014. In 2023, costs were EUR 5 million and receipts EUR 70,000 which the management blames on fare evasion, as a result of which electronic ticketing systems are now being investigated. A range of multi-journey tickets are available and the single is just EUR1.20, but tickets cannot be bought on the bus. (Il Giornale SM)

SARDINIA

CTM Cagliari started the new year with 45 new electric buses, 38 Solaris Urbino 12 with pantograph charging and 7 6-metre plug in Otokar e-Center. Press reports say difficulties with battery life is an issue leading to breakdowns and cancellations. CTM now has 114 electric buses with a further 112 due by the end of 2026 when the fleet will be 80% electric. (Cagliari Casteddu online)

SICILIA

Autolinee Lumia, part of the Cuffaro group based in Agrigento, received 12 Iveco Crossway hybrids in December renewing almost half their fleet, while SAIS had 9 similar buses the following month. In Messina, ATM have a further 24 6- and 8-metre Karsan, bringing the fleet of electric buses to 50 – further deliveries will bring the total to 104 in 2026.

The retendering concluded (after delay – see

BWW235/6) with an award of an in-house contract to AST as part of its restructuring, and the remaining 4 regional contracts to 4 consortia established for the purpose. While your editor has not been able to establish the operators in each consortium, implications from comments made suggest that the previous contractors have retained their own work. One interesting development is that longer distance routes on the island must have vehicles capable of carrying disabled passengers, and be fitted with a toilet, coffee bar and snack machine. The new contracts are due to take effect on 1 April for 9 years.

TOSCANA

AT's recent deliveries include 6 Karsan 6-metre minibuses for urban shuttles in Lucca's narrow streets with a further 19 to be delivered mid-year. 12 similar buses delivered to Firenze for operation on city routes C1 and C2 were funded by the EU and arranged through the city administration. A further 70 electric buses are expected to be in service in Firenze by the end of 2026, New to Arezzo are 2 Otokar Vectio C and an Isuzu NovoCity Life. Siena has 3 Otakar Vectio C, while in the more mountainous region of Massa and Carrara deliveries have included 4 Otakar Vectio, 2 Isuzu NovoCIty Life, and for interurban routes 3 7-metre Indcar Mobi and a 10-metre Iveco Crossway.

TRENTO

There is no provision in Italian laws and regulations for the construction of tram-trains, but Anfisa (the national agency for road and rail safety) has held some informal discussions with various local agencies leading to speculation that a possible trial could be between the state railways main line at Rovereto and Riva del Garda. There is currently an hourly direct bus between Riva, Rovereto and Trento and a less frequent indirect service, but the northern end of Lake Garda suffers from severe traffic congestion at weekends and holiday times. (Il Quotidiano)

JAPAN

KOCHI

Japan's record-breaking international tourism boom has sent hotel rates soaring but one company believes it has found a solution for budget travellers: a capsule hotel bus. Equipped with special seats that unfold into 12 flat bunk beds, the Hino bus accommodates up to 24 passengers and will begin a weekly service on a trial basis between Tokyo and southern Japan's Kochi prefecture. The 13-hour trip, launching March 4, will cost 7,300 yen (US$48) one way during a trial period with a regular service to launch later this year. The service is expected to attract budget-minded international travellers as well as young adults travelling to concerts and other events in the capital. The bus, named 'Sommeil Profund' - French for deep sleep - has adopted new government safety regulations intended to secure passengers with reinforced seat belts and protective railings in case things go bump in the night. Akitoshi Umebara, president of operator Kochi Ekimae Kanko, said,"Many people think of overnight buses as cheap but uncomfortable. I want to give them the option of lie-flat seats and turn buses into the transportation option of choice." (Travel Weekly Asia)

KYOTO

Kyoto is considering the introduction of the nation's first dual-pricing system on buses, which charges a higher fare for tourists compared to residents, in a bid to tackle a booming influx of foreign visitors, driven by a weak yen and the lifting of post-pandemic travel restrictions. In addition, the scenic ancient capital of Japan could also implement other measures to manage the influx, including express tourist-only buses that run non-stop between the city's major tourist areas. Koji Matsui, Mayor of Kyoto, said that "this is an effort to balance daily life and tourism, and we plan to propose it to the city council as part of a roughly two-year plan". (The Portugal News)

MATSUYAMA

In a Japan first, a self-driving bus began operating here on Dec. 25 at fully autonomous "Level 4," which does not necessitate manual driving given certain conditions. According to the operator, Matsuyama-based Iyotetsu Group Co., this is the first regular service in the country for a route bus running at Level 4. The roughly 1.6 km route it takes is between Takahama Eki-mae and Matsuyama Tourist Port stations, going both ways. The fully electric vehicle can carry up to 12 passengers and run at a peak of 35 kmh. Of the roughly 60 round trips it takes, during winter driverless operations will be limited to between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Only cashless payments are accepted on board. Safety officers holding Class 2 large vehicle licenses are aboard, while employees also monitor the bus's operation remotely from an office within the city. (The Mainichi)

TATEYAMA

The last 8 trolleybuses in Japan were withdrawn from the Tateyama tunnel route after a running day on 30 November 2024.They will be replaced by new electric buses. (Buses Feb 2025)

KYRGYZSTAN

BISHTEK

Bishtek has closed its extensive trolleybus system, replacing it by Chinese electric buses. 144 trolleybuses were in operation at the end of 2022; 100 were to be transferred to Osh and others to Naryn and Batken. There was a public outcry with citizens calling for the decision to be reversed. (Buses Jan 2025)

LITHUANIA

VILNIUS

Vilniaus viešasis transportas (VVT) has launched a public procurement for 145 new electric buses, a mixture of 8m low-capacity low-floor buses, 10m medium-capacity low-floor buses, 12m two-axle low-floor buses and 18m three-axle articulated buses. The contract with the selected suppliers is expected to be signed in the third quarter of 2025, with the new zero-emission buses entering service between 2026 and 2027.

Vilnius is also continuing its trolleybus fleet renewal. The last of 91 new Škoda trolleybuses has been delivered to the VVT depot in Viršuliškės, completing the latest phase of upgrades. With the integration of all 91 new trolleybuses, the first phase of the trolleybus renewal programme will be complete. However, a second phase has already begun, with plans to acquire an additional 73 new trolleybuses.

Alongside fleet renewal, Vilnius' public transport route network will be expanded. Seven new routes are planned, 44 routes will see increased frequency, and 46 routes will be adjusted. In the city centre, public transport is planned to run every 6–10 minutes, with intervals of up to 15 minutes in outer areas. The total number of vehicles is set to increase by 30%. (Bus-News)

LUXEMBOURG

Voyages Emile Weber took delivery of six 12-metre BEV buses from Irizar in 2018. Shortly afterwards, the transport company placed another order for 14 BEV articulated buses, which were delivered in 2019. Voyages Emile Weber is now buying eleven more BEV buses (nine 12m and two 18m). The first buses from this order will be delivered in 2025. The electric buses now ordered are equipped with batteries of the latest generation NMC 3.0 from Irizar.

In addition to the new Irizar NMC 3.0 batteries, the buses will be equipped with a regenerative braking system, making them more efficient. They also meet the requirements of the new GSR2 safety standard. The BEV solo buses have an output of 185 kW, the 18-metre BEV articulated buses have an output of 285 kW. Both would have a range of up to 350 kilometres. (Omnibus News)

MEXICO

NATIONAL

In March Volvo Buses unveiled a Mexican-made electric double-articulated bus in Mexico. The new 7800 electric bus series is also available as a simple electric articulated bus. The rolling basis is the electromobility platform called BZR, with which the Swedes want to improve the bus rapid transit systems in Mexico. With the new electric buses, which will be built in Mexico and currently only for the market there from 2026, a more efficient and sustainable passenger transport system can be presented. Volvo Buses has more than 25 years of experience in the Mexican market and is the market leader in the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) segment.

The Volvo 7800 Electric double-articulated bus with a length of 25.6 metres can carry up to 300 passengers, while the single-articulated electric bus can carry up to 191. Both models have a charging capacity of 250 kWh. The new electric buses will be offered in Mexico including a maintenance contract. (Omnibus News)

NEW ZEALAND

News reports to Keith Rapley at kkeeiitthh@btinternet.com

AUCKLAND

Bus services in the city are operated under contract to Auckland Transport, the city's transport authority. Tendering is split into five 'packages', each made up of a number of 'units'. The first package to be awarded in the current round of tendering was won by Tranzit Group, and they take over their new work in May. Their new electric buses have mostly been delivered ahead of time but the charging infrastructure is behind schedule. The results of the second package were announced in January and most of the units have been won by Ritchies, who take over commencing October. The contract will see 175 new electric buses on the streets, and is worth NZD1 billion over the nine-year duration. Ritchies have also bought over Pavlovich Coachlines, one of the last significant family concerns in the city, as consolidation of the industry continues.

WELLINGTON

The city has a few electric double-deckers in the Tranzit fleet but these are unsuitable for many routes, in particular the main truck route 2 that passes through the restricted height Karori and Seatoun tunnels. Articulated buses are seen as a possible solution to capacity issues on that route and as there are none in the city, one was borrowed from Auckland to do route trials in January. If the trial is a success and electric artics are ordered, they will be the first in the country.

NIGERIA

LAGOS

In December the University of Lagos launched eight electric buses, marking Nigeria's inaugural deployment of such vehicles. The electric buses, a donation from Ogata Global Resources—a group of university alumni—mark a major advancement in fostering eco-friendly transportation within the campus. These eco-friendly, zero-emission buses, fuelled by solar power and electricity, are designed to cut down on pollution, lower transportation expenses for students, and enhance campus mobility. (Tech in Africa)

NORWAY

OSLO

Vy Buss, Norway's largest bus company, has ordered three Solaris Urbino 9LE electric buses. The vehicles will be used on routes in Slemmestad, a suburb of Oslo, with delivery scheduled for July 2025. The buses for Vy Buss will be equipped with the so-called Scandinavian Package, which includes additional thermal insulation and features such as a snow chain drawer and special anti-moose lights designed to deter wild animals from walking on the road. (Omnibus News)

OMAN

100 Golden Dragon school buses have been exported to Oman. Painted orange they are small, between a mini and a midi. (BusworldBusiness 21-2-25)

PAKISTAN

News for Pakistan is compiled by **Peter Myers**. Please email your reports to petermyers061@gmail.com

NATIONAL

A bus service between Gilgit, Pakistan, and Kashgar city, China, via the Khunjerab pass, was restored on 12 November 2024. It is run jointly by Northern Areas Transportation Co (Natco), a Pakistan government-owned company, and Xinjiang-Kashgar Xin Lu Transportation Co. The service was suspended in 2010 after a huge landslide damaged a 14km (8.7 miles) section of the Karakoram Highway which links the two countries. The service will run twice a week, and the passenger fare is PKR 18,000. It is estimated that about 320 passengers will use the service each month. (The Frontier Post)

KARACHI

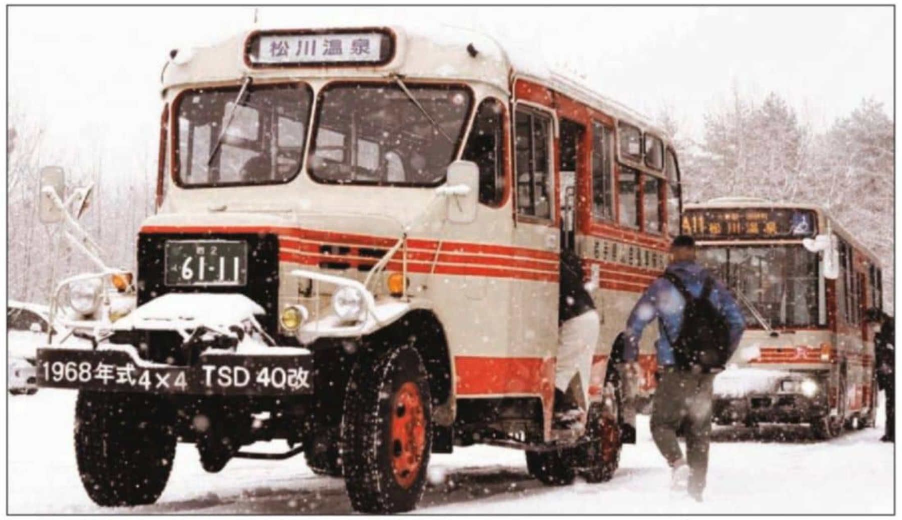
The Sindh government announced that it would set up 40 stops by January for the People's Bus Service across the city. The bus stops will provide passengers with seating and protection from the weather. Meanwhile, the Sindh government took over the operation of the Green Line BRT from the federal government in December. (Dawn)

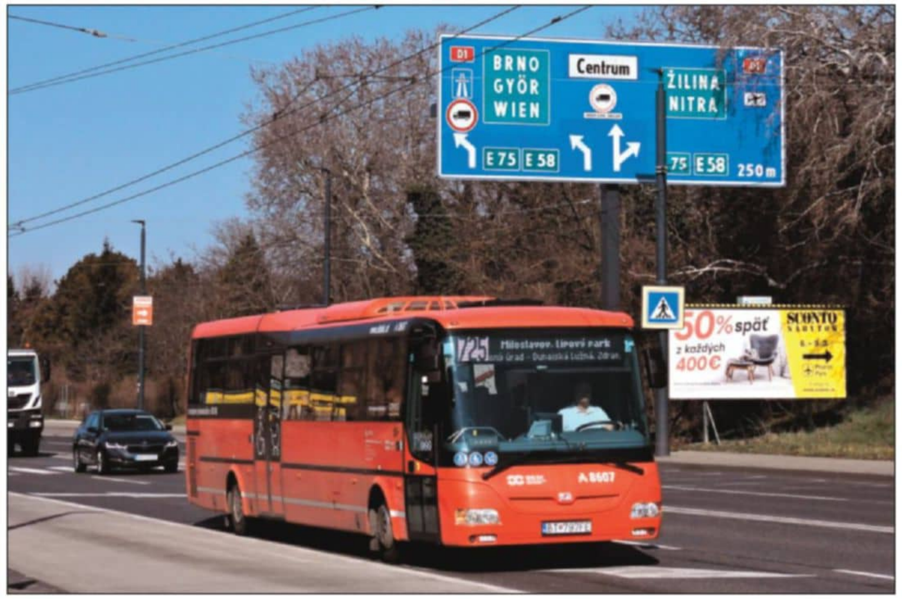
LAHORE

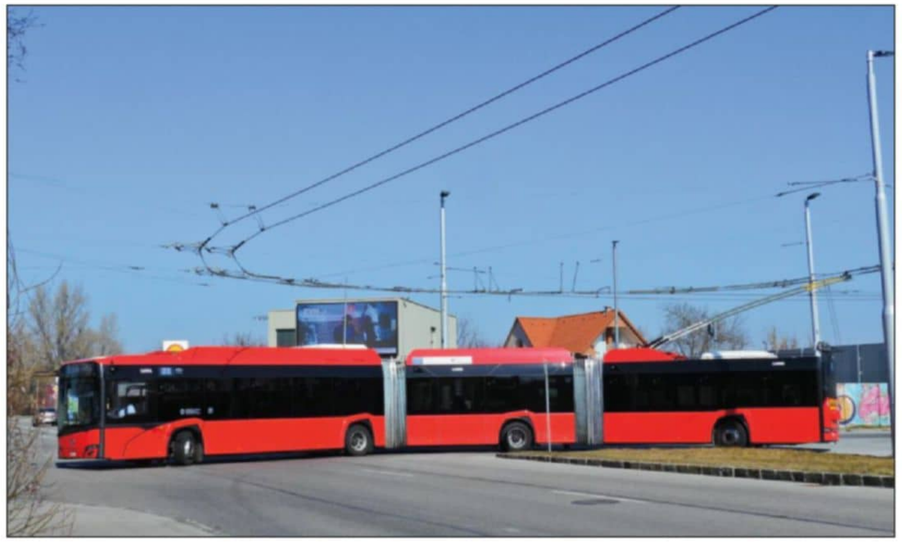
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz inaugurated Lahore's first electric bus route on 19 February. She confirmed 27 Yutong E12PRO buses had been delivered with each seating 30 passengers and with room for 80 standees. The 21km (13 miles) route is from Lahore Railway Station to Green Town, via Queen's Road, Mozang, Ferozepur Road and Punjab University Campus Bridge. It is expected that at least 17,000 people will travel on these buses daily. The flat fare is PKR 20. It is expected the Punjab government's electric bus fleet will eventually total 400. Meanwhile, the Punjab Masstransit Authority is planning a tram route to run from Thokar Niaz Baig to Harbanspura in Lahore. In February, it was announced that there would be a feasibility study into an underground electric train service to serve Lahore. (The Express Tribune, Pakwheels)

PESHAWAR

TransPeshawar is to expand its BRT system with







TOP: Japan. Every winter this 4-wheel drive Isuzu TSD40 dating from 1968 is operated by Northern Iwate Transportation between Morioka Bus Centre and Matsukawa Onsen until around March. Here it loads in Hachimantai in December last year. (The Yomiuri Shimbun)

MIDDLE: Slovakia. Arriva 8667, a SOR CN12-3, in Bratislava on 06/03/25. (Martin Harák)

BOTTOM: Slovakia. Bratislava 6906 is a Skoda 38Tr at Stn. Vrakuňa on 06/03/25. (Martin Harák)

21 ODJAZD ZA 6 MIN
103
PILEA

TOP: Poland. Covered in winter grime, Legnica MPK 110 is an elderly Neoplan N4020 still in service in January. (Jan Marek)

MIDDLE: Poland. A Pilea electric bus in Zielona Gora. (Jan Marek)

BOTTOM: Poland. Komunikacja Miestska Rybnik (KMR) currently has twenty Polish-made Nesobus 12 hydrogen buses (023 to 042). Here 038 clearly shows its three-door layout. (Martin Harák)

new routes along Ring Road, Bara Road and Khyber Road. They will be served by 72 new diesel-hybrid buses. (The Express Tribune)

RAWALPINDI

The Punjab government started work at the end of December on a PKR 7 billion project to introduce electric bus services in the city. It is expected 102 electric buses will serve 10 new routes before the end of 2025. The buses will be housed in depots to be built at Siham and Saddar. (Dawn)

PANAMA

Unfortunately this item, referenced in "Bus Business Worldwide" in BWW236, was omitted from that issue. On 28 June 2024 Chinese manufacturer JMC reported that it had delivered a first batch of 16 Touring light buses to Panama's Ministry of Education for use as school buses. A further 18 were to follow. JMC claims it holds "a leading position" in the small-bus segment of the Panamanian market, says "Panama, as a transportation hub in the Latin American region, has always been the key market for JMC", and describes this deal as marking "a significant step of JMC's development in the local market, turning a new leaf of the relationship with the local government." Comparing this order for 34 vehicles with JMC's huge shipments to Cambodia (q.v.) makes this prose seem rather overblown. Are there really swarms of JMC "light buses" dominating the country's "small-bus segment"? (JMC Group website)

PERU

NATIONAL

The German transport giant FlixBus expands into Peru, its fourth Latin American market, announced CEO André Schwämmlein on LinkedIn. Starting in Brazil in 2021, the company now serves over 100 cities there, followed by Chile in 2023, where it reaches 50% of the population. Mexico joins the list in 2025, targeting a $6.5 billion to $8.6 billion bus market. Meanwhile, Peru's $18.8 billion market dwarfs Europe, the U.S., and Canada combined. Peru's limited rail system and reliance on buses for travel make it a prime target, Schwämmlein notes. The company plans a nationwide network by late 2025. (The Rio Times)

POLAND

All items from **David Suffolk** unless otherwise mentioned.

NATIONAL

Pilea, which is a brand of ARP E-Vehicles, is a new Polish small-scale e-bus manufacturer based in Bydgoszcz. So far they have produced 24 vehicles, 8 of which are demonstration vehicles owned by the manufacturer and 16 have been sold. They are running with 5 operators. (Jan Marek)

An indigenous website containing more Polish news than can possibly be summarised in BWW has recently come to light. Called www.transport-publiczny.com (TPPL here to distinguish it from any similarly named source), it publishes items about all forms of public transport almost daily and by 3 March 2025 the numbering of them had reached 86221. Unfortunately it is difficult to work with; although links to the articles are dated the articles themselves are not and the article number only appears at the end of a long string of Polish in the URL, so that if you have article 85959 on screen there is no easy way of getting at 85958, 85960 or any other by number. Worse, auto-translation into English sometimes replaces the URL by the article's English title without its number at all. If you follow "see also" links you are likely to lose your way completely. The easiest way of discovering what has been published about any particular place seems to be to search for that placename, but you must spell it correctly. Accents are not required, but the crossed L must be used where needed. "Lodz" and "Slupsk" do not work; you must search for "Łodz" or "Słupsk". (Note that this letter comes at the end of the Polish alphabet; on busphoto.eu, for example, you will not find Łodz, etc. under L in its list of Polish cities). A successful search will return a list of items in reverse chronological order with title, first two lines and date of each. You can harvest this list some way (as screen dumps if all else fails) and then begin to do battle with the site's algorithms to find what you want. The word "hydrogen" works as a search criterion and on 20/2/25 returned 71 results from 12/2/25 back to 20/6/18. Of some interest – at least the first couple of times you read largely the same thing – are the detailed specifications Polish operators issue to would-be bidders for their orders which are included in TPPL pieces. A sample is included under Tczew below but space will not permit much of this info to appear here in future. Note also that the formal names of Polish urban operators often include the word "w" ("in") and an inflected form of the placename. Thus Gdynia has PKM w Gdyni, Kielce ZTM w Kielcach and Toruń MZK w Toruniu. However, auto-translation usually renders them as MZK Toruń, etc, in English, so we shall not confuse readers with too much pedantry!

POZNAN

MPK Poznan has ordered a further 9 Solaris Urbino 12 hydrogen buses, which will bring its fleet of H2 buses to 34. (Sustainable Bus Feb 2025)

OŚWIĘCIM

Remarkable survivors in the fleet of Miejski Zakład Komunikacji sp. z o.o. w Oświęcimiu have been some DAB 12-1200B of 1992-7 acquired from Denmark in 2005-9. In February 2025 busphoto.eu listed nos. 56/7/9/64/7/70/4 as still current and most of them were photographed in service during 2024, 57 as recently as October and 59/70 in September. There used to be more of them but 55/63/5/6/8/71-3 have been withdrawn (55 and 65 in 2024). MZK seems to have taken a liking to DAB buses after acquiring some of 1982 vintage in 1991 and even acquired some 1992 examples from Gliwice in 2015. Nos. 55 and 65 seem to have been replaced by 50/1, two Solaris Urbino III 12 of 2007, ex-Warszawa in 11/24, which followed two Urbino III 18, also of 2007, which became 48 in 10/22 and 49 in 3/23. MZK's newest bus appears to be Urbino IV 12 electric 47 of November 2020, but a money tree must have borne fruit around 2017 as Urbino III 8.9 LE 27-30, Urbino IV 10.5 31-38 and Urbino IV 12 hybrid 39-45 all arrived in 2018/9. (46 is a 2006 Urbino III 18 ex-Kraków in 2019). Total fleet strength per busphoto.eu is about 42 buses, so 2018/9 saw almost half of it renewed. The Urbino 18 pictured on page 65 of BWW229 (KOS 1864F) does not seem to be an MZK bus; it may belong to the organisation which manages the former concentration camp sites.

TCZEW

Tczew is c30km SSE of Gdańsk. The municipality has sought bids from suppliers able to show they have delivered at least five 10.5-12 m electric buses meeting homologation requirements in the three years to 4 February 2025 (the closing date for submissions) for the supply of ten 3-doorway, 70-passenger e-buses, co-financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which appears to have approved the purchase already. These first e-buses in Tczew are to be 11.5-12.2 m long, 2.5-2.55 m wide, at most 3.4 m high and fully low-floor with steps only permissible at the seats behind the rear axle. All doors are to open inwards. At least 25 passengers are to be seated. Motor or motors, net power at least 180 kW, battery capacity at least 300 kW/h and batteries able to be charged at 150 kW (preferably 200 kW) are required but no range seems to be stipulated. Charging is to be both via a pantograph mounted on the bus and via a plug-in facility with a minimum power of 120 kW. Two selected buses are to have a passenger counting system. The choice of supplier will depend 55% on price, 20% on "safety and technical and operational assessment", 15% on warranty and guarantee periods offered on vehicles, driveline and batteries and 10% on the method of fulfilling warranty and service obligations proposed. A first batch is to be delivered within 10 months from signing the contract and all are to arrive within 11 months. Supplier must guarantee at least 12 years of operation, assuming about 70,000 km of use annually. (TPPL)

TORUŃ

In June 2024 MZK w Toruniu Sp. z o.o. had 151 buses, viz. 99 Solaris (including 10 electric, one hybrid and three CNG), 44 MAN (including 14 hybrid) and five Ursus (CS12LF 605-7 and CS10LF 608-9, all new 2016) in regular service, two historic Jelcz (120MM/1 413 of 1994 and 120M/3 515 of 2003) and a driving-school bus which must be Solaris InterUrbino I 12 400, built 2010 and acquired from Clermont-Ferrand (France) in 2020. Most of the MAN (518..556) date back to 2004-8, the Solaris (557..674) from 2007-23. Only buses 555-7 and 619 are articulated, while 572-6 are 8.6-metre midibuses. The CNG buses (558-60) were new in 2010, the Solaris hybrid (596) in July 2015, the 14 MAN Lion's City A37/NL253 hybrid (631-44) entered service at the end of 2018, and the city's first six e-buses (661-6) were new in May 2022, along with the infrastructure for charging them (three slow chargers at the depot and a fast pantograph charger at each of St. Catherine's Square, University, and Rubinkowo II). Four more e-buses (671-4) and chargers arrived in May 2023. Another 40 e-buses are needed by 2028 for Toruń to comply with Poland's Act on Electromobility and Alternative Fuels, which requires at least 30% of buses in use to be zero-emission buses or run on biomethane. MZK planned to reach this point by early 2026 but has had difficulty sourcing both electric and hybrid buses within its budget, Solaris having been the only bidder and offering prices above what MZK had budgeted. One reason Solaris may have been the only bidder was the terms for tendering including a requirement for the supplier's "share of goods and services from the EU market" to exceed 50% as well as electrical technicalities. That rules out buses made in China but other EU makers probably don't bother tendering in the knowledge that many Polish municipal budgets will not meet their prices. After receiving Solaris' reply to its tendering invitation of 22 March, on 27 June 2024 MZK signed a contract with Solaris for the supply of four 12-metre "mild hybrid" buses to be delivered by the end of June 2025 at a cost of almost PLN 1.9 million from the municipality's own funds. By the same date Toruń had submitted another application to NFOSiGW (q.v. Gdansk in BWW236) for co-finance for purchasing 25 e-buses and charging infrastructure and one to EU programme European Funds for Kujawy and Pomerania for 10 e-buses and infrastructure. On 22 July 2024 MZK decided to accept Solaris' offer to supply ten e-buses for "PLN 31.488 million gross", obviously Urbino 12 electric as its specification was for buses 11.5-12.2 m long. The contract requires delivery of these ten buses within 12 months and MZK has an option until end/June 2025 to order a further 30 at the same price also for delivery within 12 months of a firm order being placed. (TPPL, busphoto.eu)

WARSAW

MZA Warsaw has ordered a further 50 Solaris Urbino 18 artic e buses. So far MZA has received 1350 Solaris of which 163 were electric. (BusworldBusiness Feb 2025)

WROCŁAW

A Yutong U12 e-bus began four weeks of tests "around Wrocław and the agglomeration" on 22 June 2024. It was scheduled to run to Miękini (7 routes) 22-28/6, Wiszni Mała (930) and Czernicy (920) 29/6-8/7 and Długołęki (904/11/4/21) 9-20/7. Whether this happened before or after the order placed with SOR (BWW235) is unclear. (TPPL)

ZGIERZ

Residents of Zgierz (NW of Łódz at the end of interurban tram route 45), Aleksandrów Łódzki and several smaller towns lost a direct connection to the Stryków industrial zone when route 2bis, operated by Markab until December 2024, was suspended for three months. Zgierz said it could not maintain the route on existing terms and sought but failed to getinter-municipal agreement to make its costs "more realistic". Route 2 (Aleksandrów – Zgierz – Stryków) was withdrawn in 2021 when MUK (Miejskie Usługi Komunikacyjne w Zgierzu; Zgierz Municipal Transport Services) cited similar financial problems; the 2bis replaced it after a 4-month break thanks to a subsidy from Starostwo Powiatowe w Zgierzu, which casual auto-translation renders vaguely as "the district office" but careful steering of Google Translate reveals to be Zgierz "County Hall", "powiat" meaning "county".

No further development in the "still to be considered" future of route 2bis was mentioned in the report of a further round of cuts published on 3 March 2025. This time the main victim was Proboszczewice, between Zgierz and Ozorków. Interurban tram route to Ozorków has been suspended since 2018; now several bus routes worked by Markab have been withdrawn as well. Fallen patronage is cited as a reason as well as the need to save money. The long list of service reductions does not affect routes 6/61 to Łódz Kaliski/Fabryczny railway stations or route 10 to Ozorków. (TPPL)

PORTUGAL

Your Sub-Editor for Portugal, **Barry Wilkinson** welcomes your reports. Please send them to. barry.wilkinson1@virginmedia.com.

NATIONAL

A new scheme commenced 01/12/24 enabling people under the age of 23 to travel free on public transport throughout Portugal. This will likely cost 40 Million Euros per annum to operate.

LISBOA

New vehicles here are 24 MAN articulated buses type Lion's City G numbered 2821 upwards.

MADEIRA

It is reported that CAM are expecting 23 new vehicles, 15 diesel wheelchair accessible buses plus 5 electric vehicles plus 3 similar vehicles for use on Porto Santo. It is also rumoured that a few of the withdrawn old buses recently displaced by new deliveries have been put aside for a possible bus museum project. However this has been mooted before.

QATAR

Qatar's Ministry of Transport (Mowasalat) has joined with Yutong, a Chinese manufacturer of commercial vehicles, to break ground on its electric bus assembly plant located at Um Al Houl Free Zone. The project aims at establishing a production hub for EU-standard electric buses on a 53,000 sq m area. This greenfield plant, equipped with state-of-the-art welding, painting, assembly, and testing workshops, will utilize cutting-edge electro-mobility technologies, ensuring efficient and sustainable production processes, said the company in a statement. The construction work is set to be completed by the end of 2025. By then, the facility will have begun producing electric city buses, metro feeder buses, school buses, and more, with an initial output capacity of 300 buses a year. Over time, the facility will scale up to meet both local demand and the growing needs of international markets across the MENA region and Europe. The foundation stone for the e-bus assembly plant was laid on December 15. The plant will contribute to achieving the MOT's strategy of public bus system electrification by 100% by 2030. (Plant & Equipment News)

ROMANIA

PLOIEȘTI

On Friday, 17 January 2025, the first of 22 SOR EBN9.5 electric buses arrived in the courtyard of the Pod Înalt trolleybus depot in Ploiești. The new buses are not only intended to rejuvenate the existing obsolete fleet of the city carrier Transport Călători Expres (TCE), but will also run on two new suburban lines to the commune of Ariceștii Rahtivani, located west of the city. The buses are the result of a tender for the delivery of 22 midi-electric buses that was announced on 5 July 2023. The tender also included the supply of 8 fast-charging stations and another 22 slow charging stations. The evaluation criteria included price (40%), capacity (10%), length of warranty for the vehicle as a whole (10%) and separately for batteries (10%), electricity consumption (10%) and range on a single charge (20%). The 28-seat buses are supposed to travel up to 220 km on a single charge in ideal conditions. The project was supported by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. (Československý Dopravák)

RUSSIA

All items supplied by **Nikolai Semyonov**, e-mail ATTMG@mail.ru

NATIONAL

In 2019-23 **federal support programmes** enabled Moskva and Sankt-Peterburg (the country's richest cities!) to receive a total of 5,278 motor buses, 282 trolleybuses, 240 large battery buses and only 156 trams. Various provincial cities receive or are seeking input from federal support programmes but to what extent improvements to bus services feature is unclear. In a new one launched as "The Efficient Transit System" are five municipalities including Ulan-Ude in eastern Siberia.

Urbantrans-2024 took place in Moskva's Expocenter on 10-13 December 2024. Gruppa GAZ, Russia's largest bus manufacturer, exhibited its range of small and medium-sized low-floor and cross-country-style motor buses, externally closely matching the latest GAZelle (strictly GAZel') City with a low-floor area at its sole double-width passenger doorway. The wholly high-floor GAZelle NN 4x4 has had its wheelbase extended by 0.14 m and its rear overhang by 0.5 m. It has a 2-litre, 149 hp diesel engine and a 6-speed mechanical gearbox. The all-electric e-City small school bus equipped with an anti-alcohol drivers' lock and 3-point safety belts on all passenger seats. A distinctive minibus variant was a vehicle designed for VIP roadside-project inspections containing only five rotating seats (chairs?) each at its own large window! Less alike were its larger designs: PAZ Citymax 9 CNG for up to 84 passengers in Sankt-Peterburg light-blue livery, Citymax 12 for up to 115 and LiAZ Cruise tourist/intercity coach apparently having some relationship with the Chinese Foton. VolgaBus exhibited Russia's first large urban low-floor 3-door hybrid bus with a traction motor powered by a diesel generator or a capacious storage battery. Many of its components seemed to be Chinese.

KAZAN'

An impressive display of all 39 latest-style MAZ-303 trolleybuses took place in the city center on 19 December 2024.

MOSKVA

Although Gazprom has opened over 800 gas fuelling stations around the country since 2012 there are still only eight in Moskva and only Avtobusniy Park #1 operates gas buses.

MOSKVA REGION

Moskva City operator Mosgortrans is to take over suburban bus routes between the capital's outskirts and the largest nearby cities including Balashikha (NE, pop. 521K, up from 215K since 2010), Krasnogorsk (NW, 188K), Khimki (NW, 255K), Podol'sk (S, 315K) and Reutov (E, 114K). Mosgortrans remains wealthy enough to reduce the average age of its fleet to only 4.6 years and be one of Russia's few operators able to afford articulated buses, while incumbent operator Mostransavto faces the expiry of service-life limits on the bulk of its larger buses and coaches which include vehicles built for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and obtained very cheaply thereafter. It is to concentrate its available resources on fleet renewal with smaller vehicles more suited to serving the region's smaller towns and countryside. The re-distribution of routes is to take place in July and December 2025.

NABEREZHNIY CHELNY

KamAZ, celebrating the 55th anniversary of groundbreaking for its factory, displayed its newest large urban low-floor bus/e-bus KamAZ (NefAZ)-5255 in its home town (E of Kazan') on 13 December 2024. At Urbantrans-2024 in Moskva it showed only the medium-sized Vega low-entry urban model with full-width doors front and centre, produced jointly with the much smaller SimAZ (q.v. Ul'yanovsk).

NOVOSIBIRSK

Twenty-three of a total order for 49 rigid low-floor trolleybuses with storage batteries for c25 km of off-wire running fully loaded had been received and accepted without problems by December 2024.

SAMARA

The municipality has invited experts from Moskva to look into optimizing local public transport, which is at present quite poor. Even the daytime service to Kurumoch international airport about halfway between Samara and Togliatti normally has nothing more than a private operator's small, constantly overloaded GAZelle buses barely able to accommodate air passengers with large cases.

SARATOV

At present this large city along the Volga river remains seriously dug-up, though the latest municipal statements suggest that trial operation of upgraded tram lines may start by 23 February 2025 and regular passenger service follow in mid-spring. Meanwhile the bulk of passenger services are provided (where possible!) only by medium-sized or small buses of several private operators.

STARIY OSKOL

Enough "capacious" motorbuses are reported to have been obtained and drivers trained to replace the express tramway which has connected the town with the giant metallurgical works since 1981. Patronage has dropped to a quarter of its original level due to growth in private car usage, but the works is now said to be afraid of Ukrainian drones damaging the tramway infrastructure! (Stariy Oskol is NE of Kharkiv (Ukraine) and ESE of Kursk).

UL'YANOVSK

As well as producing the medium-sized Vega low-entry bus jointly with KamAz (see above), SimAZ continues to assemble smaller buses on Isuzu chassis. Examples were noted in summer 2024 on some busy hilly services in occupied Crimea. The name SimAZ is derived from the original name of the town, Simbirsk.

RWANDA

KIGALI

In March BasiGo announced a new contract to deliver 28 new electric buses for operation within Rwanda, with the first batch of vehicles set to debut in Kigali in April. The new buses are set to operate on both city and inter-city routes, following a commitment made by BasiGo to deploy 100 electric buses within the country before the end of 2025. BasiGo's CEO Jit Bhattacharya said, "BasiGo is proud to be delivering the largest shipment of electric buses to date into Rwanda." (Bus-News)

SAUDI ARABIA

JEDDAH

Jeddah is set to undergo a significant transformation in its public transportation system with the introduction of new routes and an expanded bus fleet. According to the Arab News, starting from 1 April, the number of bus routes in the city will increase from six to 14, with 91 new buses being introduced, including three electric vehicles. The expansion will also see the number of bus stops grow from 46 to 383, aiming to accommodate up to 9 million passengers annually. The improvements also include enhanced safety measures, with buses equipped with surveillance cameras linked to a central control system using facial recognition technology. Officials emphasised that the expansion aims to make Jeddah's public transport system more accessible, reliable, and secure for all passengers. (Kazinform)

RIYADH

The public bus network in Riyadh has been extended to serve the city's Diplomatic Quarter, which houses many of the foreign embassies in the capital. New bus routes will run from the King Saud University Station to the Diplomatic Quarter daily starting from 6:30 a.m. and ending at midnight.

The new routes come as the Royal Commission for Riyadh City continues its efforts to expand the public transport network in the city. As well as the high-profile launch of the Riyadh Metro in December 2024, which now has six lines covering an area of more than 176 km, the commission is also working to expand the bus network. There are now more than 2,860 bus stops and stations in the city, covering a total length of 1,905 km with a daily capacity of 500,000. (Arab News)

SERBIA

NATIONAL

For many years in the the cities of the former Yugoslavia could be found Ikarus buses, which, however, had nothing in common with the more famous Hungarian manufacturer of the same name. This Ikarus was founded in 1923 as an aircraft manufacturer, and it adhered to this program until the early 1950s, when production for the civilian sector, especially bus bodies, began. In 1992, as a result of a dispute with the Hungarian Ikarus over the use of the brand, the Yugoslav side relented and added the letter "b" to the company's name, giving birth to Ikarbus. Ikarbus produced vehicles on various chassis, both its own and brands such as MAN, Mercedes-Benz and Volvo. Its production facilities were supposed to allow the production of around 750 buses a year but the economic problems of crumbling Yugoslavia greatly reduced production. The company thus repeatedly ran into financial difficulties, which culminated in its declared sale to a Chinese partner in 2018. Officially, Yinlon Group was listed as the buyer, but in reality it was Lanzhou Guangtong New Energy Automobile Co., LTD., which was founded only in 2017 as a new subsidiary of Yinlon. Despite what was claimed in the media, the company remained (mostly) in the hands of the state which hoped that the Chinese investors would take the company under their wing and develop it. However, by the end of 2018, 153 employees were laid off and only 27 retained, mainly in the field of service.

Probably the last Ikarbus bus was produced in June 2018, when there was a ceremonial handover of a completely new type, an IK312M intercity bus on an MAN chassis, to Subotica. No more followed. Later the new Chinese owners did import one of their 12-metre electric buses to Serbia, the assembly of which was theoretically to be considered in the Balkans. At the end of June 2021, the Serbian prime minister was assured by the Chinese owners that after a year and a half of preparations, Ikarbus was ready to resume production but the only tangible result of the Sino-Serbian cooperation in Ikarbus was an attempt to obtain European homologation of the electric bus, while in the spring of 2022 it was optimistically stated that the production of the type in question in Serbia could start as early as the autumn of the same year. The Chinese did say that "It will not be a big business". It wasn't. Because the assembly did not start at all. Although the Chinese electric bus was supposed to complete the homologation it then disappeared from Serbia and the Chinese tried to sell it in Germany. Amazingly, in the spring of 2023 the director of Ikarbus said that he had no idea whether the sale had been successful and that he had no news of the vehicle. By now the Chinese had majority ownership (59%) of Ikarbus, but not directly through Yinlon Group but through the Serbian company Green Stone Investment, which was 75% owned by Lanzhou Guangtong. The Serbian government retained a 5.1% share.

By mid-2023 the debts of Ikarbus were said to amount to around €2.5 million and the Chinese made it clear there would be no investment to rescue the company. During 2023 the production hall was sold at auction, and at the beginning of 2024 the manufacturing machinery that still

TOP: Romania. The first of 22 SOR EBN9.5 electric buses arriving in the courtyard of the Pod Înalt trolleybus depot in Ploiești in January. (Primăria Ploiești)

MIDDLE: Portugal. New to CAM on Madeira last year was this Temsa MD7 Plus. Here it is seen departing Funchal in February. (Phil Walters)

BOTTOM: Serbia. The MAN-based Ikarbus IK312M supplied to Subotica in 2018. (Ikarbus)

Great North Transport

1 120 VALENCIA - ALBAL
100% Electric
metrobus

140 VALENCIA
225 FBus

existed was also sold. Green Stone Investment has claimed that it poured €5 million into Ikarbus since 2019, but on the other hand it stopped paying all wages since May 2023. However, as recently as March 2024, Green Stone Investment stated at a shareholders' meeting that its goal was to resume production, but it would have to wait for the expected tenders in Serbia for new buses, especially in Belgrade and that the production facilities would have to be rented or a new one built. Despite all of the above, Ikarbus continues to exist as an independent company and has an active website, www.ikarbus.rs. It just has nowhere to produce buses anymore. (Československý Dopravák)

BELGRADE

To update the lengthy saga well covered in BWW236, the GSP, the city's public transport company, wanted to buy 100 new trolleybuses, but the mayor decided rather to let a private company take over the trolleybus system and replace it with battery-electric buses.

The unsolicited proposal to replace the trolleybuses with BEBs came from the Strela company of Obrenovac, which already has several contracts to operate certain routes in Belgrade and other cities. They offered to replace the trolleybuses with battery-electric buses and run the services for a payment from the city of about £6.50 per km, provided that they were also given part of the site of the trolleybus depot.

Since then the unions who represent the GSP drivers and employees have been protesting and have held several demonstrations. Despite this, the mayor's decision has been confirmed by being published in the city's Official Gazette.

It seems that the next step is that the proposal will be put out to tender, as the contract cannot be awarded without that. The owner of Strela Obrenovac is a prominent member of the ruling party in Serbia, a country which is presently wracked with protests about perceived corruption, after the collapse of part of the newly refurbished Novi Sad railway station caused 15 deaths.

Another news snippet revealed that after the changes of 2023, and of course before fares were abolished from the beginning of 2025, the fares income in Belgrade was covering just 10-15% of costs. (This of course was a factor in opting for the change to free travel.)

Two corrections to 236 - the first sentence should be 2025 of course. And, while more buses are appearing in blue, they appear to be only those being operated by the private sector (under city contracts for certain lines).

The buses in blue still have no indication anywhere on who is the owner or operator, despite the protests of the GSP unions, and the requirements of Serbian law. They do have a P number, now only on the back of the vehicle. This is a five-figure number, with the first three digits representing the owning bus company, and the last two digits identifying the individual vehicle. These numbers are presumed to be allocated by the city to those private vehicles that have been contracted and licensed to provide the services. But they won't mean anything to the general public, who don't know who is the operator. (Martin Kerridge)

TOP: South Africa. New in 2020, a Gauteng bodied Mercedes-Benz of Great North Transport. (Great North Transport)

MIDDLE: Spain. An AlfaBus eCity L12 of MetroBus in Valencia 02/03/25. (Michal Dekánek)

BOTTOM: Spain. Seen in Valencia is FBus 225, a King Long B12LF XMQ6120AGD5. (Michal Dekánek)

SINGAPORE

Singapore will trial self-driving public bus services in Marina Bay and one-north, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) announced in January. This will start with smaller buses with at least 16 seats, on Service 400 in the Marina Bay and Shenton Way area, followed by Service 191 in one-north. These two services were selected for their shorter and simpler routes, said LTA. One-north is part of an existing autonomous vehicle (AV) testbed, where trials have been conducted since 2019. LTA will purchase six autonomous buses. They will operate alongside existing buses and will be deployed from mid-2026 for an initial period of three years. Depending on the performance of the first six buses, LTA may consider buying up to another 14 autonomous buses, which will enable the trial to be expanded to two more public bus services. (CNA)

SOUTH AFRICA

CAPE TOWN

Cape Town's rollout of electric buses has kicked off, with Golden Arrow Bus Services (GABS) bringing its first 20 EVs into service. Another 120 electric buses are set to be added to the fleet by the end of the year. The large-scale electric vehicles, manufactured by Chinese automotive company BYD, have been in test since 2020. They are expected to make a measurable difference to the company's carbon footprint, as the current fleet includes some 1,200 diesel buses.

Also in line to add EVs to its bus service is the City of Cape Town itself, says Rob Quintas, the city's mayoral committee member for urban mobility. The city is set to introduce 77 electric buses to its MyCiti fleet in the next two years. The electric fleet will operate along new routes between Mitchells Plain, Khayelitsha, Wynberg, and Claremont. If all goes according to plan, these 12-metre vehicles will be delivered in 2027. (News24)

LIMPOPO

Limpopo government bus-owned company, Great North Transport (GNT) has closed over 200 routes in February due to financial problems. The bus company has lost over R300 million in the past five years. The affected routes span multiple areas throughout the province, including Seshego, Mokopane, Motetema, Giyani, Tzaneen and Makhado. Meanwhile, GNT CEO Matata Mokoele says they are in the process of procuring a new fleet of buses. "We have been struggling to service several routes across the province. The reason being that we have a shortage of buses. Most of the buses are old and as a result, we are experiencing breakdowns daily and when the buses break down, we are already depleted in terms of the fleet it creates that problem for us. As a result, we end up using the existing buses to do multiple routes," says Mokoele. (SABC News)

MPUMALANGA

Police are investigating malicious damage to property, attempted murder and assault following attacks on some depots of PUTCO on 27th January. The worst was at the Moloto depot where 50 buses were torched and two workers were injured when people ambushed security personnel. The group then set buses on fire. (SABC News)

SPAIN

Clive D'eath is the editor for Spanish news and he can be contacted on clive.death@orange.fr

NATIONAL

Arriva presented in February in Lugo the vehicles it will use on its LINEA DIRECTA route in Galicia. They are four MB Intouro M Optimum seating 59.

The **Plana Group** has announced the investment of 5.5 million euros in 45 vehicles. The route to Camp de Tarragona has seen passenger numbers increase by 1 million to 7.6 Million and interurban route L68 is now converted to urban in its central section through Vilanova and Geltrù with 9 returns between 04.50 and 23.20.

Two depots have been enlarged: Reus now covers 44,500 m2 with a capacity of 100 vehicles, Hospitalet 10,100m2 and a capacity of 72 vehicles. A reminder there are 5 other depots at Taragona, Vilanova, Calafell, Barcelona and Montblanc. Total fleet is around 600.

To expand on the **Grupo Ruiz** notes last month, Ruiz, with its 200 million euro turnover in 2024 (for an operating profit of 34 million) will probably be in the news in 2025. Mariano Ruiz began in 1890 with a single horse bus in Arganda del Rey. Andres is the 5th generation in charge. In 2024 urban ridership rose by 11.9% and interurban by 12.4% according to ANETRA

There are 21 group companies, including Unauto in Toledo, Tubasa in Badajoz, CTM in Morocco and Periferia in Madrid. Group fleet totals 1 037 – 572 in Spain, 96 in Cascais (Portugal), and 368 in Morocco where the emphasis is on works transport. Staff in Spain account for 162 million euros of turnover, Cascais for 15 million and 20 million in Morocco.

The strategic plan for 2025 – 2028 calls for tendering in places like Ibiza and Santiago de Compostela.

291 vehicles operate MINITS in Badajoz and Zaragoza. Rolled out in 2020 it is a cross between a small bus and a motorbike.

Also trialed is BUSME (Badajoz, Toledo and Murcia). Over 100 vehicles are electric

Regional rail contracts may be sought when the system becomes open to competition in 2026. And Ruiz is not absent from ecological transport, participating in Inspira Madrid, a project to generate and distribute green hydrogen. And Ruiz owns 70 recharging stations for electrics.

Sunsundegui news appeared in the Diario de Navarra on 14/01/2025. The Concursal (legal administrator) has put in place an ERTE (Expediente De Regulación Temporal de Empleo) – a staff contract that guarantees their salary, with the objective of retaining them and their expertise until a new owner can take over. This is valid until 30/04/2025 but may not be renewable so 30th April is a target date. Monthly staff meetings monitor progress – even so 25 staff have left, leaving 351 under contract. Where the money to pay salaries comes from is not clear.

The paper puts the figure for debt at 49 million euros, which seems to be a repetition of the original figure. An injection of capital seems essential.

According to the Diario, there is one potential purchaser. The Diario names the business as Dumarey Group from Belgium. Assuming the Diario as reliable then there are a number of issues. Dumarey is not a bus builder but (sic) a developer of world class engines, energy storage, control systems etc. Certainly not a body builder. And Dumarey does not really have a long history – set up in 1986 as Punch, subject to an MBO in 2015 and renamed Dumarey in 2024.

ALICANTE

Vectalia Mobilidad took over the urban network from MASATUSA on 01/02/2023 and it was renamed MIA. Now Vectalia is delivering on its promises with the arrival in July 2024 of 18 electrics at a cost of 13 million euros possibly helped by 2,530,000 euros of Recuperation Plan funds. There are 7 MB eCitaro and 11 MAN Lions City E. MIA runs 35 routes with 101 buses, it claims 23 electrics and 25 hybrids. Whether these 18 are included in those figures is not clear.

BARCELONA

An UNVI double deck electric, presumably model Urbis 123, is receiving final testing on the street (Sustainable Bus). It is the first of 18 which fulfil the July 2024 order for 23 vehicles at a total cost of 18.3 or 19.2 million euros according to source. They will be overnight charged. The other 5 are minibuses for Bus Del Barri services.

TEISA – Transports Electrics interurbans – is doubling timings on Ripollès to Barcelona where passenger numbers have increased from 124,000 in 2011 to 285,000 in 2024. Similar action has been taken in the past on other corridors.

BIZKAIA

Bizkaiabus expects to receive 105 buses in 2025 – 53 from the original 2024 order plus 52 more. This will improve the fleet profile – 346 vehicles made up of 249 diesel, 97 hybrids and 6 electrics. (Autobuses y autocares)

GRANADA

In September 2024 ALSA placed in service a further 4 hybrid electrics, taking their total of green vehicles to 49. These 4 are MB Citaro LF 12m , acquired for a little under 1.770.000 euros.

LAS PALMAS

The municipal fleet (275 vehicles) will be receiving 18 vehicles in 2025. Ten will be 12m, (with another 10 to come in 2026), six will be 7.5m, and 2 built for handicapped transport. That will cost 5.1 million euros. Then there is the future new depot at Hoya de la Plata. As a temporary measure land has been acquired next door for parking. That is 6 million euros. The press quotes that the Municipality of Las Palmas will be subsidizing its publicly owned GuaGuas with 20.7 million euros in 2025. (11/11/2024 revista Viajeros)

Twelve Scania K320UB capacity 92, are there in February numbered 861 – 872 with Castrosua New City bodies, worth 4.4 million euros, and 20 new drivers are welcomed at the same time. Almost as valuable! (Autocares y Autobuses Magazine)

EMT La Palma is authorized to order 100 electrics for 33 million euros over years 2025, 2026 and 2027. A new ECO/EMT depot at Poligono Son Rossiñol is becoming urgent as the present depot at Colld'Enlabassa can house 150 vehicles on 30,000m2 of land and the fleet is now 257. (Diario de Mallorca)

MALAGA

EMT is celebrating 75 years of urban buses, beginning with the SMTU – Servicio Municipal de Transporte Urbano. A 1983 vehicle preserved by local association TRAN BUS will tour schools and spend time parked at the Bus station, carrying a pictorial history. A short history can also be found on the website of La voz de Malaga going back further to the tramways.

MURCIA

The Council (Consejería) is providing 2,245,000 euros to help equip 1,000 regional buses with "second generation" tachographs.

VALENCIA

In December 2024 the municipality authorized EMT to buy 176 electric and hybrid buses. Amongst a plethora of figures, 145 are electric with 69 million euros of aid from the European Investment Bank and the other 31 are understood to be artic hybrids. There are also 167 charging posts.

The investment plan for 2004 to 2008 totals 171.158.000 euros, with a fleet of 527 buses, 215 of which will be new.

VITORIA -GASTEIZ

TUSA has received 10 Irizar e-mobility vehicles for route 4 – 4 standards and 6 artics. This municipal operation has purchased 43 'green' buses since 2017 -
2017 10 artics
2018 5 hybrids
2019 5 hybrids
2021/02 13 electric
2014/05 10 electrics

ZARAGOZA

CTAZ has awarded 22 routes in the south and west of the city and which form part of the new "mapa consorcial" to Agreda Bus. Operations began in December and 16 municipalities will be served. Agreda Bus is part of ALSA. Only 3 pure electrics are involved, the other 30 buses are "biometano". The contract is worth 45.3 million euros.

For those interested, lot 1 covers routes 410 – 413, 501,510,511,N41: lot 2 covers 601-604, 611-613, 615, 619, 620 700 N61, N63, N64. (13/11/2024 Autobuses y autocares)

SRI LANKA

Malcolm Chase (MGC) is the news gatherer for Sri Lanka, please email mandvchase@gmail.com

NATIONAL

The Dept of Motor Traffic Commissioner has said that most buses currently plying on Sri Lanka's roads are built on lorry chassis and imported from India. Some buses feature poorly designed seating arrangements, with insufficient legroom or cramped spaces. They must be replaced by quality low-floor buses when they can be afforded. Meanwhile items which have been added to the front of buses such as garlands, plastic flowers, toys and balloons, etc, must be removed to improve drivers' visibility. (Mirror 14-1-25)

Following the decision in Dec 2023 to buy 200 new buses in 2024, it has now been decided to modernise the SLTB fleet with 1000 new buses, including low-floor and super luxury buses. The decision to focus on online seat reservations on long-distance services has paid off. (a bit late, ed MGC). There are currently 600 long-distance buses. The State is entitled to 40% of bus workings, but the available fleet is insufficient. Currently the private sector has 50% of the market on expressways and 60% on normal routes. There is also a decision to introduce several Park & Ride systems and also cashless payments to speed up fare collection and reduce fraud (Mirror 25-1-25). The Budget has set aside Rs 3 billion to procure 100 low-floor buses for the Colombo urban area (Daily News 21-2-25)

SWEDEN

The editor for Sweden is **David Suffolk**. All news reports about Sweden to 48 Southbank Road, Southport, Lancs PR8 6QN, UK or email to bwwdavidsuffolk@gmail.com

NATIONAL

Since the revamp of www.svenskbusshistoria.se (SBH) the easiest way to capture new vehicle data has been to do an annual trawl of it around February using just the previous year as a search key. This produces a catch of around 1,000 vehicles in no very useful order (chassis number order probably the best option for getting batches of vehicles together) which needs to be copied and pasted bit by bit into a Word or similar document as the webpages will not download as one would wish. A massive amount of work is then needed to get all this data into a state from which news for BWW can be derived, including further online research to find details such as passenger capacity and first allocation which only appear on individual vehicle records, not on listings.

Another source being worked on is a blog in the Forum section of Svenska Omnibusföreningen (SvOF)'s website called "Vilka upphandlingar väntar vi svar på närmast?" which auto-translates as "What procurements are we expecting answers to next?". This contains over 2,000 postings from 2013 to date. Thankfully the 135 webpages of it so far are in forward chronological order and can be downloaded easily. David has managed to create a single document in auto-translation English containing everything worth archiving from them but again extracting from a goldmine of raw data nuggets of information worth printing in BWW is very difficult. This blog shows that the Swedes themselves have great difficulty keeping track of what is going on in their country. Every contract award which can be contested seems to face one or two levels of appeal (to the Förvaltningsdomstol (Administrative Court) and Kammarrätt (Court of Appeal) respectively) and so when changes are supposed to happen is frequently not when they do happen; existing contracts have to be extended or temporary awards made to keep services running and when matters are finally settled reporters and bloggers may have moved on to other subjects.

JÄMTLAND

Jämtland (Z) is an entirely inland län W of the N part of Västernorrland (see below). Its S part is also known as Härjedalen. Its "capital" Östersund is the only large population centre along the E14 (formerly E75) road between the Swedish Baltic coast at Sundsvall, 184 km SE, and the Norwegian coast at Trondheim, 268 km W. The regional transport authority is Länstrafiken Jämtland, a.k.a. Z Länstrafiken (from its logo). It clearly won a website name race, being the owner of https://ltr.se which could have been claimed by any other Swedish RTA. Its Linjetrafik webpage explains clearly who does what, Länstrafiken itself being responsible for coordinating, planning, procuring and marketing public transport in Jämtland, while Connect Bus, Centrala buss i Jämtland Härjedalen AB and Vy buss are the operators contracted to work the various bus services. Connect Bus runs in all districts except Ragunda, Centrala bus in Jämtland Härjedalen AB runs in Ragunda and works cross-county routes 30 (Hammarstrand - Bispgården – Sundsvall), 40 (Östersund - Hammarstrand - Sollefteå – Örnsköldsvik) and 46 (Östersund - Sveg – Mora) and Vy buss works Östersund city services. Route 45 (Östersund - Dorotea - Storuman – Gällivare) is operated by Centrala bus Norrbotten. Routes 40 and 46 are very long routes taking nearly 4½ hours and over 5 hours respectively, while 45 is an 11¼-hour marathon with 10/15-minute stops at Strömsund (102km), Dorotea (174), Storuman (300), Arvidsjaur (454) and Jokkmokk (628) during the journey of about 720km (distances from a road atlas, not shown in timetables).

In February 2025 Z Länstrafiken offered over 400 PDF timetables both for the current period (15/12/24-27/4/25) and the coming one (28/4/25-13/6/25). No simple route list is offered but one can be compiled easily if laboriously from the links inviting the downloading of timetables. Östersund has Stadstrafik routes 1-7 and 11, Regiontrafik route numbers are scattered between 26 and 846 and Nartrafik services are area-grouped as 1001-21, 2001, 3001-6, 4001-18, 5001/2, 6001-9, 7001-4 and 8001. The 4xxx are around Änge, 40km or so NW of Östersund, not to be confused with Ånge in Västernorrland, mentioned below! Routes 701-4 are a special group of routes in the Åre district which run only seasonally. Z Länstrafiken says "During the summer, cycle buses are operated and during the winter they are "rebuilt" and become ski buses. The cycle and ski buses are now part of Länstrafiken's regular scheduled services. This is the result of a new agreement between Länstrafiken and SkiStar. The collaboration contributes, among other things, to better vehicle utilization – the bus can be used as a school bus in the morning and afternoon and in the middle of the day it can run as a cycle or ski bus." The 2024/5 skiers' services finish on 27 April and details of this summer's cyclists' services were not available as this was written, so we shall not waste space on them here but if you are interested you now know what to look for!

LANDSKRONA

Three new Solaris trolleybuses named Elton, Elise and Elina have been delivered and become 1891-3 in the fleet of Keolis, which has taken over from Nobina since the most recent tendering process. (keybuses via Clive D'eath)

MALMÖ

In December 2024 it was reported that Nobina had been awarded a new contract (value SEK 1 billion annually) to operate all city services for 12 years from June 2027, unifying the two contracts currently in force. The fleet is supposed to be 95% electric at the start of this period and become 100% electric during it with more 18m and 24m buses than at present. An SvOF blogger quotes the current fleet ("with the risk of forgetting some"!) as 21 Van Hool ExquiCity 24 electric of 2022, 15 ExquiCity 24 gas hybrid of 2015, 88 Volvo 7900EA of 2021-2, 13 Volvo 7900E of 2018, 22 MAN 12-metre of 2021 and 90 M-B Citaro gas buses of 2015-9. That accounts for 249 out of a fleet the same person quotes (from "Sydsvenskan" of 7 December) as due to rise from 275 to 300 vehicles. Just ten gas buses are to be retained, expected to be 4026-35, which are the newest. The biggest question mark hangs over the procurement of 24-metre buses for route 5. The gas hybrids of 2015 were supposed to be replaced in 2024, "but were delayed" until 2027. Whether this "delay" occurred before or after the collapse of Van Hool is unclear. Solaris and Hess are the only possible suppliers of such buses anyone can think of now. Solaris 18-metre e-buses are already on order for Malmö.

SVEALANDSTRAFIKEN

In January 2025 it was reported that this operator had cancelled two out of three orders it had placed for Ebusco e-buses, redirecting its custom to Volvo. Svealandstrafiken first ordered 23 Ebusco 3.0 artics in June 2022, to be delivered in H2/2023. In November 2022 it ordered 13 more, also to arrive in H2/2023. In March 2023 it ordered 23 13.5-metre 3.0 for delivery in H2/2024 with an option for another 41 of that type. Exactly how many of the first order have now arrived is not known to us, but in late February svenskbusshistoria had records of only two, 7109, which it has with Ebusco Sweden AB in Göteborg on 15/5/24 and with Svealandstrafiken on 17/7/24, and 7111 which it has with the operator on 21/11/24. As 17 Volvo B0EA / 7900EA new in 2022-3 and in use in Västerås are 7092-7108, presumably the whole batch will be 7109-31. They are to run in Örebro. Having agreed cancellation terms with Ebusco, Svealandstrafiken has now ordered 13 Volvo artics to join the Ebusco on Örebro city services and 60 non-artics "for regional transport in Örebro and Västmanland counties". The artics are due to arrive in early 2026. (keybuses via Clive D'eath, Sustainable Bus, SBH)

VÄSTERNORRLAND

Västernorrland (Y) is Sweden's thirdmost northerly län with a coast below Nordbotten (BD) and Västerbotten (AC) on the map. Its N and S parts are also known as Ångermanland and Medeland respectively and the town of Ånge is in the latter, not the former! The regional transport authority is Din Tur ("Your Trip"). It has it head office at Kramfors (some distance off the E4 N of Härnösand), presumably neutral territory to avoid offending any of the main "cities" and a "customer centre" at Ånge (over 90km W of Sundsvall), together employing 50 staff. It says that as well as regional services it provides urban services in Härnösand, Sollefteå, Sundsvall and Örnsköldsvik (listed in Swedish alphabetical order; the last is popularly known as Ö-vik) but only Sundsvall has actual town services simply numbered 1 and 2. Din Tur offers a PDF timetable for each of 48 routes for the current period only (15/12/24-15/6/25 or 15/12/24-13/12/25). No simple route list is offered but one can be compiled easily if laboriously from the links inviting the downloading of timetables. Routes are numbered 1/2 and 120..213. The timetables do not name the operators but the more obscure webpage https://www.dintur.se/om-oss/trafikomraden/ contains a map of contract areas and a list of contracts and their operators. Mittbuss and Nobina are the current incumbents in all areas apart from S3, which is route 40 (Ö-vik – Östersund), operated by Centrala bus i Jämtland Härjedalen AB. Nobina won the tender for bus traffic along the E4 between Härnösand and Ö-vik from 11 December 2016. Din Tur contracts were supposed to expire in the summer of 2022 but have been extended four times, most recently until December 2027. A new award, effective from 2027, is due to be made at the end of 2025. (Din Tur website, SvOF blogger)

SWITZERLAND

All items supplied by **Malcolm Chase** unless otherwise credited. Details of new bus deliveries from the Swiss Bus Society.

ARBON

Switzerland's first driver-less midibus is expected go into service in Arbon on the Bodensee. In January 2025. Built by Karsan in Turkey, the E-Atak electric bus will ply a 2.2km lakeside route, but will have a safety driver too. (Buses October 2024)

FRIBOURG

TPF Fribourg, the combined urban and country operator for the whole of Fribourg canton, has ordered a large number of Mercedes e Citaros under a framework order for a minimum of 35 and a maximum of 183 buses. 24 will come by December 2026. (Sustainable Bus)

RECENT DELIVERIES

PostAuto Regie:-
Only 3 buses, 2 Citaro LE U C2 Compact-Hybrid and one K-Bus-Iveco Daily City VI, a 4x4 stationed in Laax.

Postal contractors (PU operators):-
Two MAN Lion's Intercity C ScolaCar for L'Autopostale dl Mendrisiotto, TI
An MB e Citaro Elektrobus for Karl Gessinger, Bad Ragaz, GR
A Crossway for Lathion of Sion, VS
A MB 519cdi 4x4 Sprinter for Buchard of Leytron, VS

TOP: Spain. **Arriva 665 is an Irizar i3LE in Valencia Sud on 01/03/25.** **(Michal Dekánek)**

MIDDLE: Slovenia. **Ljubljana 414, a 1998 Avtomontaza bodied MAN NG312, was still in service in March.** **(Martin Harák)**

BOTTOM: Slovenia. **An MAN Lion's Intercity of Arriva passing one of the operator's earlier Irisbus Crossways in Ljubljana on 17/03/25.** **(Martin Harák)**

Urban and regional operators:-
AAGL Liestal – 5 MB Citaro C2 Compact-Hybrid
AAGS Uri – 3 MB Citaro C2 Compact-Hybrid
BLT Oberwil - 3 MAN Lion's City 10E Elektrobus
SBW Winterthur -6 Hess lighTram artic trolleybuses, nos 134-9.
STI Thun – 2 MB Citaro C2, 5 Citaro C2 artics and also 2 MB Intouro K for Grindelwald-Bus.
ZVB Zug – a Solaris Urbino Elektrobus and a MB/Atlas Auto Sprinter Novus Cityline EV
GEM'Bus St Julien-en-Genevois, France 17 Mercedes Citaro, of which 15 artics, for operation in Geneva.

Other news:-
H Baumgartner, AZZK, Zurich. Founded nearly 100 years ago, it has been run by several generations of the Baumgartner family ever since. Now there is no one to follow on so the bus routes will cease in the next year or so. The main route from Zurich Belleveuplatz via Zollikon to Kussnacht was one of the last small operator routes to serve a main city centre. Until 1990 it was a real "independent", described in the old Swiss Kursbuch as a Concessionnaire, with a fine range of printed tickets. When the Zurich Verkehrs Verbund, ZVV, was formed in 1990 it lost its independence but continued as a contractor to VBZ, and in recent years expanded with several extra routes. Now its depot is too small for even one more bus, needed to meet demand, and its facilities for staff are out of date. The obvious replacement operator would have seemed to be Verkehrsbetriebe Zurcher Oberland, VZO, another very old firm, but the latter is struggling to update its own 4 depots to take electric buses and has no space. So VBZ will have to find a replacement operator.
I saw AZZK buses several times and they once sent me a set of tickets. The 1964 Kursbuch had its main route as C 710, with a subsidiary route C 709h running Zollikon to Zollikerberg, both having capacity shown as 85 platze. In 1982 the two routes were 730.10 and 730.15. In the last printed Kursbuch I have, 2013, the routes were 70.910/2/7/8/9, route nos 910/2 etc. All were shown as VBZ, Betr [Betriebe] Hans Baumgartner. It will be a sad day when the last of their light brown buses runs in. Ed MGC

TANZANIA

NATIONAL

China's Yutong Bus has revealed its next generation of the front-engined D14 (ZK6139D) coach for the Africa market at a launch in Tanzania in March. The company said the new D14 bus offers both space and design upgrades on previous models available for the Africa market, where it has been operating for over two decades. In that time, Yutong has established a network across the continent, building a sales and service network in nearly 50 countries and selling a total of almost 22,000 buses. The extended body of the new D14 design accommodates up to 77 passengers. (Automotive World)

TÜRKIYE

News for Türkiye is compiled by **Chris Moore**. Please send any reports to him at Chris@moore.energy

ISTANBUL

Since the last report in BWW231, both the İETT and ÖHO fleets have been renewed and expanded. A summary of recent İETT deliveries follows, correcting and expanding the data in BWW231:
A3001-A3150:
AKİA Ultra LF 12. B26+72T. 2024
A5061-A5132:
AKİA Ultra LF 25. BAB29+252Q.. 2023
O5101-O5120:
Otokar Kent XL. AB32+182Q. 2023
A ceremony was held at İETT's İkitelli garage on February 19, 2025 to celebrate the delivery of 60 out of 200 new buses for the ÖHO fleets. These follow the usual practice of re-using existing fleet numbers. The line up in a video of the proceedings shows BMC Procity TRs with fleet numbers in the former İUAŞ ranges (A-10xx, A-15xx, A-18xx, C-16xx, C-17xx and C-18xx), except for ÖHO A-355 (34 HO 1334). There were also at least two Güleryüz Cobra DD double deckers, one of which was D-020 (34 HO 3916). Several of the replacements carried "standard" registrations (e.g. A-1558 (34 MPU 035)) continuing the confusion over the use of the new ÖHO registrations.
Effective October 7, 2024, İETT announced the launch of 11 new routes and 1,662 additional trips for the districts of Sancaktepe, Beykoz, Küçükçekmece and Maltepe all suburban districts on the Asian side. Nine new routes were created in Sancaktepe district, providing direct and fast access to metro stations and hospitals. With these lines and additional trips to existing lines, an additional 515 trips per day have been increased in the district. In Küçükçekmece district, 2 different new routes were created that directly reach Marmaray and the city hospital. With these lines and additional trips to be made to the existing lines, an increase of 492 daily trips was realized in the district. In Beykoz district, 139 new additional trips were planned to facilitate transportation to universities and other districts in the region. In the Maltepe district, 516 additional services were put into service to further facilitate transportation to hospitals, metro stations and universities in the region.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATRES

ABU DHABI

In December Hyundai delivered two hydrogen fuel cell buses as part of Abu Dhabi's Green Bus Programme. This initiative, led by the Integrated Transport Centre (ITC), aims to assess and adopt sustainable technologies for public transport. The Green Bus Programme evaluates hydrogen and electric solutions tailored to the UAE's unique environment. Hyundai's Elec City FC operates on City Route 65, while the Universe FC serves Regional Route 160. The programme runs until the end of 2025, focusing on both city and regional bus categories. (ESG News)
Abu Dhabi has unveiled a new pass for tourists. The Abu Dhabi Pass includes unlimited bus travel, a SIM card with 10GB of data, and discounts on some of the city's top attractions. For travellers arriving on Etihad Airways, the pass is provided free of charge. However, visitors arriving on other airlines can still take advantage of this opportunity by purchasing the Abu Dhabi Pass via the official website, theabudhabipass.com.
The pass offers unlimited use of public buses throughout the city, alongside 24-hour access to the hop-on-hop-off tourist bus network, which is a convenient way to explore Abu Dhabi at your own pace. Pass holders also enjoy a 15% discount on tickets for major attractions, including Qasr Al Watan, the iconic presidential palace, and the world-renowned Louvre Abu Dhabi. In addition to these perks, tourists can book various tours at reduced rates. For instance, a half-day tour of Abu Dhabi is now available for just £28. The pass is also offered to travellers taking part in Etihad's stopover program, which provides passengers with a complimentary hotel stay of up to two nights. (Travel and Tour World)

DUBAI

At the end of 2024 Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) rolled out the Bus Pooling initiative, enabling passengers to share minibus rides through a booking system on smart apps. This initiative aims to provide residents and visitors with a convenient, fast and innovative transportation solution. The service operates without fixed routes, unlike public buses. Initially, it will be available in Deira, connecting to central business districts such as Business Bay, Dubai Mall, Mirdif, and Dubai Festival City. The plan is to gradually expand the service to cover all parts of the emirate. Additionally, the service provides passengers with options for single trips or weekly and monthly subscriptions. Dubai's new bus pooling service will operate on demand, with bookings facilitated through three smart applications: Citylink Shuttle, DrivenBus and Fluxx Daily. The three companies will manage the service on the apps, with each company operating and managing 20 minibuses. The seating capacity of these buses ranges between 13 and 30 passengers. The fare will be variable, based on the distance travelled and demand for the service. (Economy Middle East)
The winner of the latest tender for the supply of articulated buses for RTA (Roads & Transport Authority) is Anadolu Isuzu which is to supply 70 diesel-powered Citiport 18. Dubai has ordered the vehicles in a three-door version, with delivery in 2026. In terms of revenue this is Anadolu Isuzu's largest single foreign contract to date, and at the same time the largest order it has won for the articulated version of Citiport. On the front panel, the vehicles will not bear the typical large ISUZU inscription, but only AOS, which is an abbreviation of the alternatively used brand Anadolu Otomotiv Sanayi. The Turkish manufacturer uses it in selected territories depending on how the rights to the Japanese Isuzu brand itself are negotiated in one country or another. For example, buses marked with the AOS mark are sold in Great Britain. Isuzu directly holds 16.99% of the shares of Anadolu Isuzu, the rest is in Turkish hands. (Československý Dopravák)

SHARJAH

Sharjah has received its first electric buses in the form of 10 King Long buses, the first 10 of an order for 20. These are a mix pf C12E Intercity coaches and 10 PEV9 city buses. (BusworldBusiness March 2025}

USA

This section is collated by New York-based **Joe Caronetti**. Please email jcaronetti@hotmail.com, with reports and photos of buses in the USA.

NATIONAL

According to a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) report, transit ridership in the U.S. continues to rise, growing by more than 17 percent from 2022 to 2023. According to the report, transit agencies provided 6.9 billion trips in 2023, an increase of 17.3% from 2022. Also it was stated that public transportation grew nearly twice as fast as domestic air travel between 2022 and 2023. Between 2013 and 2023, high-capacity transit systems like light rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) increased substantially. Of note, there are 3,000 transit providers nationwide, ranging from large metro regions to small urban and rural areas. Most transit trips take place in the large urban metro areas, nearly a thrid or 28% of transit trips are taken in small urban and/ or rural areas. For persons with disablilties, a significant increase in accesibility was shown in 2023 to have 84% of transit stations to be fully in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. (Mass Transit Magazine)

California (CA)

LONG BEACH

Long Beach Transit (LBT) launched a bus line connecting Long Beach to the University of California, Los Angeles's (UCLA) campus and Westwood Village, Calif. The transit agency also put into service its first battery electric commuter coach. Built by BYD-RIDE, the C10M will be used exclusively on the new line, Route 405. This route is intended to reduce the stress of traveling on the congested 405 freeway for UCLA students, faculty and staff members and visitors. (Mass Transit Magazine)
Thirty battery electric New Flyer Xcelsior CHARGE NG 40 foot buses were ordered by Long Beach Transit (LBT) in January. (Bus-News.com)

NAPA

Vine Transit held a contest in January which invited artists from around Northern California to design a bus wrap to be used on one of Vine Transit's new Gillig electric buses. The rolling art work was meant to celebrate zero-emissions transportation, public transit or Napa Valley itself. A $5,000.00 prize would be awarded to the winning work, with $1,000.00 to a runner up. The Gillig electric is one of 14 40-footers arriving in 2025. (Sonoma Index Tribune)

WESTWOOD

With a near $20 million grant, this UCLA campus will be shuttling its students along a wireless EV charging road, the first of the kind in California, just in time for the 2028 Olympics. The grant will also provide for more electric buses and a transit hub connecting to LA Metro's D line. Similar to wireless phone chargers, a bus with a specially installed base plate passes over the charger, communicating wirelessly. Inductive charging coils within the roadway will transfer energy to the bus' battery through the base plate. This can happen while the bus is moving or stopped, reducing down time. The reconstruction of the roadway will be minimal and will be less than a mile long.(L A First)

Colorado (CO)

DENVER

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) implemented a new ART District Connector bus route in January as part of its latest service changes. The ART route operates every 60 minutes, connecting some of Denver's most visited cultural spots by combining eastern most segments of RTD's routes 1 and 44 with a unique routing through the heart of downtown. The RTD also added more than 200 combined weekly bus & rail service hours, increased frequencies on 15 bus routes and the reinstatement of the AB2 route between Boulder and Denver International Airport. RTD adjusts bus & rail schedules three times a year keeping up with ridership changes, traffic patterns, maintenance issues and customer feedback. (RTD-Denver.com)

GYPSUM

In 2024, two bus operations in Eagle County, Colorado merged into one. Eagle Valley Transportations Authority and ECO Transit

403
YANKEE
YANKEE LINE

TOP: Bosnia & Herzegovina. A Belkommunmash trolleybus in Sarajevo. (Dominik Konečný)

MIDDLE: Turkey. A line up of BMC Procity TRs at İETT's İkitelli garage on February 19, 2025 celebrating the first part of ÖHO's 2025 fleet renewal, headed by C-1781 (34 HO 3739). At the end of the line are two Güleryüz Cobra DD double deckers (IETT)

BOTTOM: USA. Yankee Lines Mercedes-Benz Tourrider 403 approaches W42nd Street, New York when on charter in June 2024. (Joe Caronetti)

became Core Transit. At the time, fare-free was implemented, boosting ridership by 25% compared to 2023. But an issue crept up: the operational condition of its buses. Many buses were inherited from ECO transit and have suffered from lack of maintenance. As many as half the Core fleet had been out of service for that reason. Core decided to contract vehicle maintenance work out, choosing Transdev, which was to have started in early 2024, but was delayed by several months, with Transdev starting wok in December 2024, bringing Core's fleet back to life. Additonally, December 2024 saw the delivery of two Gillig electric buses, entering service in early 2025. Core also has three sidelined 2023 electric Proterras. The Gilligs have been performing very well, as they have for other transit agencies in Eagle County. (Vail Daily)

District of Columbia (DC)

WASHINGTON

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA Metro) contracted with New Flyer of America (NFI) for up to 500 hybrid and battery electric buses. The transit agency serves the tri-state area encompassing more than 6 million people. NFI received an initial order for 75 Xcelsior 40-foot hybrid electric buses plus 25 Xcelsior CHARGE 35 foot battery electrics. (Energy Tech)

Florida (FL)

ORLANDO

Universal Orlando Resort has added new Gillig electric buses to the fleet, coinciding with the opening of Epic Universe. The 40 foot buses sport character wraps featuring franchises represented in the Universal parks. As the wraps even cover the windows, they act as shades, making the buses more environmentally-friendly by reducing the need for constant air conditioning. (Universal Parks News)

PALM BEACH

In September 2024, Palm Tran launched BusLink, which replaced three low ridership lines: numbers 21, 52 and parts of the 92. Proving faster, more convenient service, BusLink included new 20-minute weekday service on its route 3, increased Sunday service to 30 minutes and 40 minute weekday service on other lines. (Mass Transit Magazine)

TAMPA

Hillsborough Transit Authority (HART) announced in early January that the bus route #1, its most popular route, will be fare free for a one year trial. Additionally, peak service frequency will increase to every 15 minutes. Serving nearly 3,000 daily riders, Route 1 operates between Downtown Tampa and the University area, providing vital service to nearly 32,000 residents and 56,000 jobs, all within a quarter mile of the bus route. (Metro Magazine)

Georgia (GA)

ATLANTA

The Atlanta Region Transit Link Authority (ARTLA) operates Xpress Commuter bus system, serving 12 counties in the Atlanta area which connect to downtown Atlanta. Under a proposal, the bus system planned to eliminate a group of bus stops in the downtown and midtown areas in Atlanta. With outcry from riders, the transit company walked back its proposal which would have required riders to change to a MARTA transit train. ARTLA is in the process of downsizing routes and extending frequencies due to low ridership and state funding cuts. The transit agency plan from the fall of 2024 called for the drastic cut of downtown stops from 45 to 12; the number of bus trips cut from 197 to 94. A survey of riders showed 81% opposed the cuts. A new proposal allows for the continuance of 41 bus stops and a number of trips at 86. As planned the service adjustment would take effect June 2025, at the same time Atlanta based businesses & corporations are requiring employees to return to office working. ARTLA stated it would adjust schedules and bus stops as needed. (Mass Transit Magazine)

Illinois (IL)

DECATUR

Decatur Public Transit System (DPTS) unveiled two of five electric hybrid buses in mid-January. The two red and white buses are Gillig E-Gen Flex models, which don't need charging and can operate fully electric for up to 200 miles per day. (WAND TV)

Louisianna (LA)

NEW ORLEANS

Just in time for Super Bowl, American Safety LLC acquired New Orleans Tours. The move allows the Louisiana based company to expand its charter fleet. (Bus & Motorcoach News)

Following the New Year's targeted attack on Bourbon Street, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) replaced streetcars with buses in temporary service changes. (WWL TV)

Massachusetts (MA)

BOSTON

Yankee Line updated its fleet with 15 new Daimler Mercedes Benz Tourrider buses, bringing a total of 50 luxury coaches to the operator, the first in the U.S. The Tourrider was introduced in 2022 and specifically designed for the U.S. market. The 3-axle 45 foot coach is offered in two versions: Business model for high end needs and Premiun for 1st class service. Yankee Line has provided luxury charter service for over 45 years and debuted its first Tourriders in 2022.

Montana (MT)

MISSOULA

Mountain Line has 10 Gillig electric buses on order. Together with its first electric buses delivered in 2019, Mountain Line will feature electric buses in half its fleet. (Mass Transit Magazine)

North Carolina (NC)

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) unveiled its first cultural inclusion bus wrap in early January. The wrap, designed by local artist Javon Jeter, celebrates CAT's mission to move forward by capturing the diversity and cultural heritage of Charlotte's community served by CATS' buses. The project was first discussed in early 2024 and a search for artists from the area was begun. The chosen artist received $500.00 and $3,500.00 after the completion of the accepted work. CATS chose Gillig BRT #1089 to wear the colorful wrap for one year. (WCNC)

RALEIGH

The city's efforts to find a contractor to build a Bus Rapid Transit line have failed for the second time. In early January, a contractor submitted a bid to construct a 5.4 mile BRT line along New Bern Avenue, but was rejected as to pricey by city officials. The delay will push completion to late 2028 at the earliest. It was hoped to have the line running by late 2025. The project calls for special bus lanes, 10 elevated stations, covered platforms in certain spots plus a park & ride lot. First bids were advertised by the city last spring but not one bid was received. The city then consulted with other agencies operating BRT lines and contractors that built them, it was decided to split the work between one contractor to work on the bus stations and another to do the roadwork, allowing them to work at what they were good at. Requests for roadwork were sent out in October; the roadwork need to be completed before the stations are built. Once contractor made an offer but was 58% higher than was estimated by a city engineer and much more than the city budgeted for both roadwork and stations combined. While several contractors showed interest, only one bid came in. Road building comes at a busy time as the builders are doing state-wide repairs due to Hurricane Helene last September. The City of Raleigh's latest plan is to break the project down into four segments: Clearing vegetation; building stations; roadwork for new bus only lanes; roadwork in sections of downtown. The City already gave the contractors until late 2028. (Mass Transit Magazine)

New Jersey (NJ)

MONTCLAIR

The nation's oldest operating coach company, DeCamp Bus Lines, closed its doors for good on February 28. After 155 years of continuous operation, the bus company referred present and future customers to Panorama Bus Tours of Wallingford, NJ. For many years, DeCamp operated daily commute line service in and out of New York City in addition to its charter business. In April 2023, the company dropped its commuter service due to decreased ridership as a result of Covid. (BWW 230). Panorama Tours, a long respected women owned company, has expended its fleet of coaches to ensure continued service to DeCamp's customers. Panorama, which received the Women in Buses Award for Excellence, has retained DeCamp's phone number, assuring a seamless transition while being dedicated to upholding the same high standards of service that DeCamp passengers have come to expect over the years. (American Bus Association News)

NEWARK

As a conciliatory move, and to say thank you to its hundreds of thousands of loyal customers, NJTransit offered a fare holiday for one week in August 2024 on all of its train, light rail and bus lines. From August 26th thru September 2, rides were free, as the transit agency and its riders experienced an extremely difficult summer of service disruptions system wide. Most of the problems occurred on the rail side of NJTransit, dealing with power issues on the Northeast Corridor it shares with Amtrak. Amtrak owns the trackage and overhead power lines on the corridor, the nation's busiest rail corridor. (ABC 7 News)

New York (NY)

MANHATTAN

The JET between NYC and DC landed for a final time on February 3. The luxury bus service apparently ceased its operations and transitioned to charter services and for-hire special events. Tickets purchased for trips after February 3 have been refunded. The regularly scheduled luxury service offered an onboard concierge, fewer seats and reclining seating. The sleek dark gray Prevosts launched in 2021 (BWW 227) with pricey service between Hudson Yards in Manhattan and D.C., partnering with Hilton's Conrad Hotels & Resorts. (Upgraded Points.com)

NEW YORK CITY

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) is exploring ways of incorporating drone technology in surveillance when tracking the more than 6000 buses in its fleet. Revolutionizing how the MTA tracks its massive fleet, the automated monitoring system would create real time mapping across 28 bus depots city wide. MTA sought proposals in December 2024 from vendors with off-the-shelf and/ or new technology providing low cost low footprint aerial vehicles which could operate within the depots and along busy urban bus routes. (dronexl)

Building on an existing fleet of 60 all electric buses, the MTA announced on Jan.10 that they purchased a fleet of 265 more electric buses on top of 205 slated to arrive this year. Additionally, the Jamaica (Queens) bus depot will be upgraded to enable electric bus charging, and should be operational by 2027. (Daily Voice)

POUGHKEEPSIE

With an eye on expanding routes and eliminating or consolidating those with low ridership, The Dutchess County Public Transit made modifications to its bus system on early January 4. (Mid Hudson News)

QUEENS

Aiming to provide better service to its Queens riders, the NY MTA has approved a new Queens bus redesign network. Better service means faster trips, with fewer stops. An overhaul of $35 million will include the adding of 11 more local routes which would bring the number of bus route in Queens to 124 from 113. Increased frequencies will be applied to seven routes. A plan for "rush routes" will be implemented, in which these new bus lines would act like subway lines, where they would run local for a few miles before switching to express mode. The MTA plans 25 "rush routes" by this summer; detail about operations are still being finalized. The MTA has been working on the Queens redesign since 2019; full implementation is expected by September. (Queens.com)

Oregon (OR)

PORTLAND

TriMet launched twenty-four Gillig NextGen "e-buses" in September 2024. The buses went into service on Line 9-Powell. The NextGen e-buses from Gillig have 33% more battery power than the previous 2021 models. Like TriMet's 2019 New Flyer electric buses, the Gilligs can also charge while on the go, with charging rails on the roof for fast charging. (TriMet)

Pennsylvania (PA)

HERSHEY

The Museum of Bus Transportation received a refurbished set of heavy-duty Stertil-Koni lifts, donated by Hoffman Services Company. The lifts will be a plus in helping to maintain the MOBT fleet of historic preserved bus and coaches quickly and safely. (Bus & Motorcoach News)

ROCHESTER

Beaver County Transit Authority made available six 2014 model MCI D4500 coaches.

Texas (TX)

AUSTIN

Citing its plans to convert to all electric buses as being overly ambitious, CapMetro placed 46 brand new electric buses into storage for at least a year. A slow roll out of end of route electric chargers has mean't keeping buses rolling a major issue. Planned expansion of electrification has also

DeCamp
DeCamp
537

THE JET
6297

5002
clean-energy bus
ELECTRIC BUS
ELECTRICBUS
New York City Bus

TOP: USA. DeCamp 537, an MCI J series, lays over near Javitz Convention Center in NYC in July 2008. (Joe Caronetti)

MIDDLE: USA. The JET has been grounded. Prevost 6297 prepares a trip to D.C. in November 2024. (Joe Caronetti)

BOTTOM: USA. MTA NYC Bus 5002, a New Flyer XE40 CHARGE, outside Macy's Department store in December 2024. (Joe Caronetti)

WORLD NEWS

been hampered by moth balling the million dollar Proterra fleet while Phoenix Motors of Anaheim, California, the company that hoped to revive the Proterra bus, struggles to fulfill service warranties and other technical issues. Phoenix Motors agreed to pause CapMetro's warranties while the Proterras gather dust. CapMetro states it is still committed to getting all 104 of the buses up and running. (KUT News)

DALLAS

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) announced in February that it has partnered with Gillig for the purchase of 476 CNG buses. The buses will provide enhanced passenger comfort and advanced safety features. The buses are expected to begin arriving in time for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Dallas. (Metro Magazine)

Vonlane, a Texas-based coach company, is offering a new luxury bus route between suburban Plano in North Dallas and Austin. Daily departures between the two cities began in late February with a one-way fare of $109. Vonlane coaches offer 22 first class leather seating, work space, WiFi (complimentary) and an onboard attendant offering cabin service with snacks, meals and beverages included. (WFAA.com)

SAN ANTONIO

GOGO Charters, one of the nation's largest charter bus rentals companies, launched a route with daily scheduled service between Houston and several other Texas cities, such as Houston-Dallas/ Ft Worth and Houston- San Antonio. Geared for business professionals and groups who want to travel together, the service is an affordable alternative to flying and Greyhound, Flixbus, Vonlane and Red Coach. GOGO's buses are less than 5 years old and provide leather, reclining seats, WiFi, restrooms and, in some cases, food and drink service. (Houston Public Media)

VIA Metropolitan Transit plans to implement service changes in April 2025 hoping to make for shorter waits for its riders. VIA plans to boost frequencies on five routes and merge or pair several other routes. (VIA Metropolitan Transit)

Tennessee (TN)

KNOXVILLE

Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) launched its new bus network in August 2024. Called "KAT Reimagined", the redesigned bus system is intended to make riding easier and consistent, providing accessibility and convenience. Featuring 20 fixed routes, buses will bring over 94,000 residents within a quarter-mile walk of a bus stop. Service is a consistent 7-day a week operation with just 3 exceptions. That give KAT a 150% increase in Sunday service. While most routes have service of 30 minutes or better, 12,000 more residents will see buses running every 15 minutes. Additionally, routes 11 and 17 combined provide 15 minutes service along Cumberland and Sutherland, and KAT route 31 will also offer 15 minute headways on weekdays. Running every 12 minutes, 7-days a week is KAT's new Downtown Connector using new electric buses. KAT Reimagined was implemented in 2024 as a result of growing public demand for better service. (Mass Transit Magazine)

Virginia (VA)

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Charlottesville Area Transit (CATS) has ten new buses on order, eight diesels and two electrics. (TV29 News)

HARRISONBURG

After a year of studies, Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (Harrisonburg Transit) rebranded its fleet of buses as Harrisonburg Connect. The launch of the new branding of light blue and gray coincides with the arrival of 15 new Gillig buses. (WHSV TV3)

LEESBURG

Loudoun County Transit, operating in suburban Washington, DC, received two Gillig electric buses in January. (Loudoun Now)

ROANOKE

The first two of three electric buses were unveiled in late February at Valley Metro. The electric Gilligs, Roanoke's first, joined the 51-fleet of buses at Valley Metro. The buses were delayed by supply chain issues; the third bus is still delayed. The buses, driven across country from Gillig's California plant, arrived in all-white and are to be branded in Valley Metro's designs. (Roanoke Rambler)

Washington (WA)

BREMERTON

Kitsap Transit (KT) will purchase up to 15 electric buses from Gillig Corp. The contract call for 10 heavy duty battery electric buses plus five 30-foot clean diesels. (Bus-News.com)

SEATTLE

King County Metro and Kiepe Electric have reached a $26million agreement to give a power boost to Metro's 174 trolley buses (trackless trolleys) which are the transit company's original zero-emissions fleet. Under the agreement, Kiepe will supply new improved battery packs which will enable the trolley buses to travel farther off-wire. The buses were built between 2015-2017 with state of the art off-wire capabilities. Metro wants to take advantage of enhancements to battery packs; Kiepe Electric supplied the original battery packs installed on the trolley buses. The new packs, which were tested on four buses, two 60 foot articulated and two 40 footers, can be charged while the bus is in motion. The testing ran over 1000 miles, assuring Metro will keep the trolley buses as an important part of their fleet.

New buses from a new manufacturer. King County Metro has ordered 4 new zero emissions buses from European builder Solaris, making this the builder's first U.S. transit contract. Metro's landmark decision will undoubtedly provide incentive for more competition among bus builders in the U.S. Metro will buy the 4 buses with an option for 12 more. The four buses will be two 40 foot and two 60 foot buses. The first buses, designed specifically for the U.S. market, are expected in early 2026. The buses, as expected, will undergo rigorous testing. Metro operates zero emissions buses from New Flyer, and has 89 battery electric buses on order from Gillig, which are due later in 2025. (Metro Matters)

SPOKANE

Spokane Transit Authority received two new double decker buses in late December. Five more are due this winter, all due for service in September 2025. The Alexander Dennis Enviro 500's, which stand at 13 feet, 6 inches in height and seat 82, are slated for STA's high performance transit route 6 and 66 lines. (KREM 2)

Reported from another source to add to the above report, ADL has delivered the first two of 7 Enviro 500 d-ds, which will improve capacity and efficiency between Spokane and Cheney. They are the first to be built by Big Rig Manufacturing, BRM, at its new facility in Las Vegas. 42.5 feet, 12.9 metres long they can seat 82 and have a capacity of up to108. (CBW 228-1-25)

Wisconsin (WI)

LA CROSSE

April 1 was the start up date for a new airport shuttle service from La Crosse to Minneapolis. Landline in conjunction with Sun Country Airlines provide the motor coach service in partnership with La Crosse Regional Airline. The shuttle provides service for those booking through Sun Country or Landline.com. Service will be available 5 days a week, except on Tuesday and Wednesday. (WKBT News 8)

MADISON

After nearly 3 years of fits and starts, Madison Metro's BRT line, which took off in September, is making an impact with riders. Sixty-two new articulated electric buses have been added to the fleet, replacing slower, shorter 40 foot buses. Additional bus garages have been built to fit the longer buses. Travel times have been cut in half in most cases. The City and Metro are looking to expand BRT into other neighboring areas. (Madison Commons)

UZBEKISTAN

NATIONAL

Uzbekistan's Ministry of Transport announced in January plans to launch new international bus routes connecting Uzbekistan with Central Asia's countries, as well as with Russia and China. According to the Ministry's press service, routes to Tajikistan will include Samarkand – Dushanbe and Bukhara – Dushanbe bus routes. Additional routes will be established to Kazakhstan (Bukhara – Turkestan, Urgench – Aktau, and Fergana – Almaty via Tajikistan) and Kyrgyzstan (Andijan – Osh, Andijan – Jalal-Abad, Andijan – Arslanbob, Kasansay – Jalal-Abad, and Bukhara – Bishkek). Bus services to Russia will also be introduced, including routes such as Surkhandarya – Bukhara – Urgench – Nukus – Moscow, Urgench – Nukus – Ufa, Nukus – Krasnodar, Tashkent – Ufa, and Tashkent – Krasnodar. Tickets for the new international routes, as well as for domestic routes within Uzbekistan, can be purchased through the official website avtoticket.uz.

The Ministry has invited transportation companies interested in organizing international routes to submit proposals. It is also open to applications from foreign operators wishing to provide reciprocal services along the specified routes. (Asia Plus)

19843342

MEMBERS' FORUM and DIARY DATES

Please send reports for these pages to Simon Brown at secretary@busesworldwide.org

There is no **Members Forum** for BWW 237 as I have received no comments from members.

DIARY DATES

Buses Worldwide Zoom meetings will be held on 21 June, 2 August and 11 October (all Saturdays), starting at 14.30 UK time. If you wish to be included on the circulation, please e-mail Brian Rowney on bri.rowney@btinternet.com. I will send out reminders about two weeks before the meeting, and the links for the meeting will be sent to those that have asked for them out a day or so beforehand. Contributions to the meeting are always welcome - they need to be in an electronic format that can be shared on-line (.jpg files are ideal).

Alton Bus Rally & Running Day will be at the HSDC Alton College site on Sunday 20th July 2025 and all being well, the Buses Worldwide stall will be there too.

For those seeking exotic locations, the **Indonesia International Bus, Truck & Components Exhibition 2025**, is due to take place at the Jakarta International Expo from 21st to 23rd May 2025.

Don't forget that **UITP (the International Association of Public Transport) 2025 expo** 15-18 June 2025 will be in Hamburg, Germany and will be celebrating 140 years of UITP. See https://uitpsummit.org/hamburg2025/. The 2026 meeting is scheduled for Dubai in April.

To celebrate **100 years of Prague buses** this year there are commemorative events taking place culminating in a parade of buses through the city on Sunday, 22nd June. Further details can be found at https://www.dpp.cz/bus100.

Notice of
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Buses Worldwide* will be held on Wednesday 28th May 2025 and will be via Zoom at 19.30 hrs BST.

Nominations for election to the Management Committee must be by written notice to be received by the Secretary not later than Wednesday 7th May 2025. Nominations must be proposed and seconded and must be accompanied by the nominee's written consent. The nominee, proposer and seconder must all be Members of Buses Worldwide* whose subscriptions are fully paid up. The maximum number of committee members allowed under the rules is eleven.

Motions which Members wish to put to the meeting for consideration should be notified to the Secretary by 7th May 2025.

Nominations to the Committee and motions for debate will be published on the BWW website and can be obtained from the secretary.

An Agenda will be available on the website or from the Secretary by 21st May 2025.

In order to join the AGM, members will need to obtain a Zoom link from the secretary (secretary@busesworldwide.org) up to the day before the meeting.

* Includes British Buses Abroad

BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWS OF BOOKS ACTUALLY READ ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. AS WELL AS THE REVIEW PLEASE INCLUDE TECHNICAL DETAILS AND IF POSSIBLE A THUMBNAIL OF THE FRONT COVER.

Title: Bewegt Das Land
Author: Stefan Limburg
Publisher: Stefan Limburg
ISBN: 978-3-905170-80-1
Price: CHF68

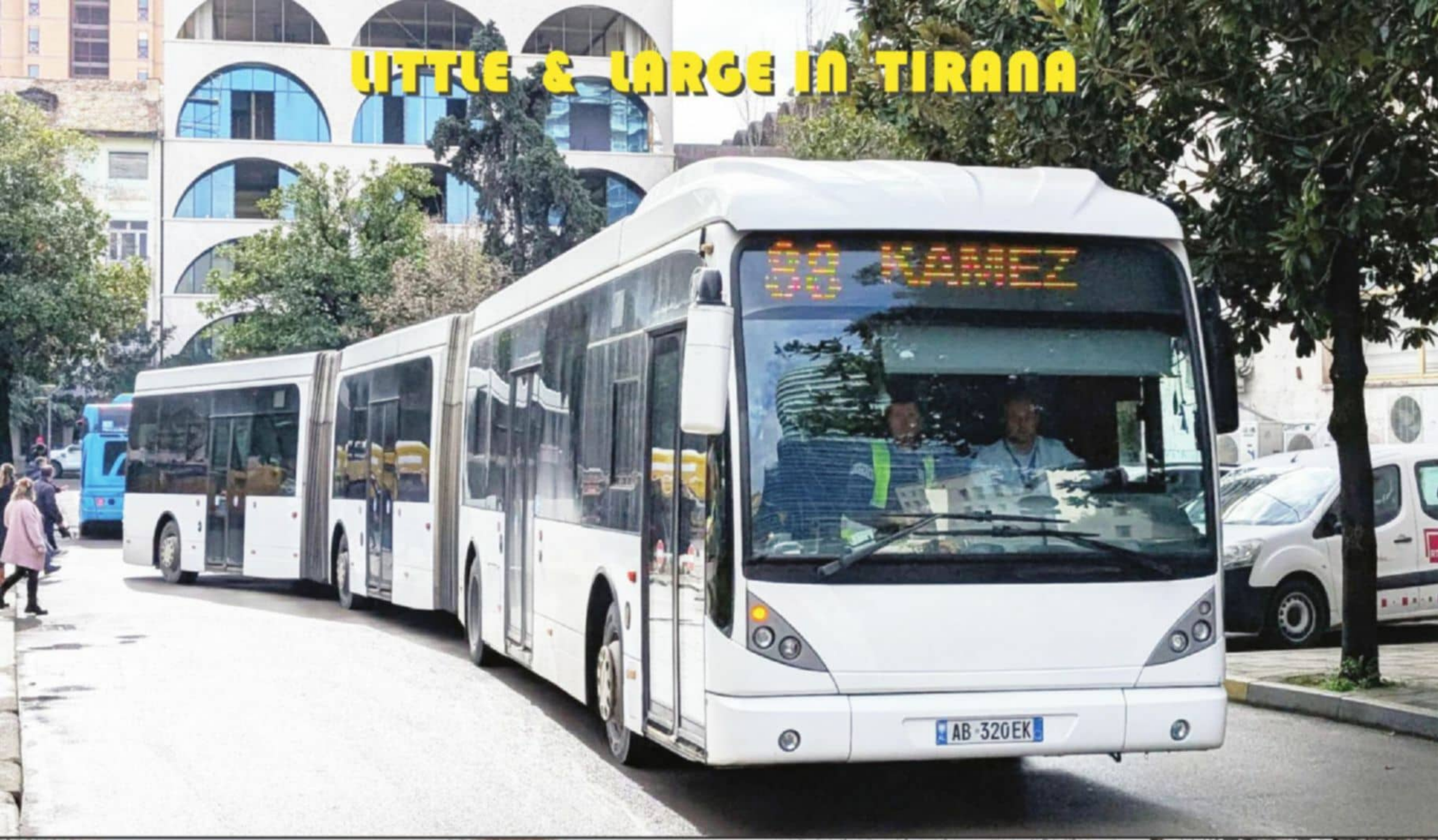
Stefan Limburg
BEWEGT DAS LAND
100 Jahre Linienbusverkehr im Fürstentum Liechtenstein

This is a fine 300 page A4 glossy book, crammed with photos and much else like a list of all buses operated, reproduction of many timetables starting in the 1920s, a few maps, fares, etc.
Your reviewer has visited Liechtenstein many times since 1964, if all too briefly and on his latest visit in October 2024 was amazed to find this book in the Liemobil travel office in the old station building at Schaan.

It is amazing how bus routes have developed since the first Postal motorbus route in 1922.
Horse bus timetables of 1905 and 1911, as well as the first motorbus timetable of 1922 and the first incursion into Austria (Feldkirch) of August 1927 are reproduced.
Otto Frommelt, the main postal contractor, Postautohalter, for many decades, shows his first handwritten timetable for the new Vaduz to Triesenberg route in 1929 and for the new Schaan and Vaduz to Trubbach route in 1931. Reproduction of the 4 routes in the 1945 Swiss Kursbuch, 759 b/c/d/e, reveal them all to be Concessionnaire routes run by both Otto Frommelt and Andreas Ritter.
Otto Frommelt's daughter retains a big archive. In 1949 they all became Postauto routes, labelled as PA in the Kursbuch, with PTT headed tickets. But sadly no tickets are illustrated.
The Liechtenstein Bus Anstalt formed in 2000 gave the whole network to the Swiss PostAuto, on tender, who immediately subcontracted the routes to Ivo Matt, instead of Frommelt.
In 2011 the LBA re-tendered the whole network to PostAuto, who this time took almost all the routes in-house as Regie routes. But in 2021 the scandal of the PostAuto fraud connected with their operations in France, now ceased, persuaded the LBA to re-tender the network. This time a consortium of Philipp Schaedler and Bus Ost Schweiz won, so, after almost 100 years, the Swiss Post Office was out of the picture.

One criticism is of the way modern photos are interspersed with old ones. It is very difficult to find key dates or points as it is only in German, with few sub-headings. But it reveals much which your reviewer did not know. The photos of every type of bus operated in Liechtenstein in many different locations over the 100 years since 1922, and every operator and livery make it a remarkable book. But it also has a list of all FL registered buses from 1922 to 2022, photos of bus stop signs, depots, bus shelters, termini and bus stations, etc. Photos include double-deckers, artics and minibuses, and local town buses, as well as a few Austrian buses.
By also including many photos of other Swiss buses over the last 100 years too, and also details of what the author calls "Der PostAuto Skandal" relating to its operations in France in the 21st Century, the book is essential for anyone who studies Swiss Postbuses seriously.
Available from Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum, www.shop.landesmuseum.li , cost CHF 68 plus postage approx. CHF 32.
Malcolm Chase

LITTLE & LARGE IN TIRANA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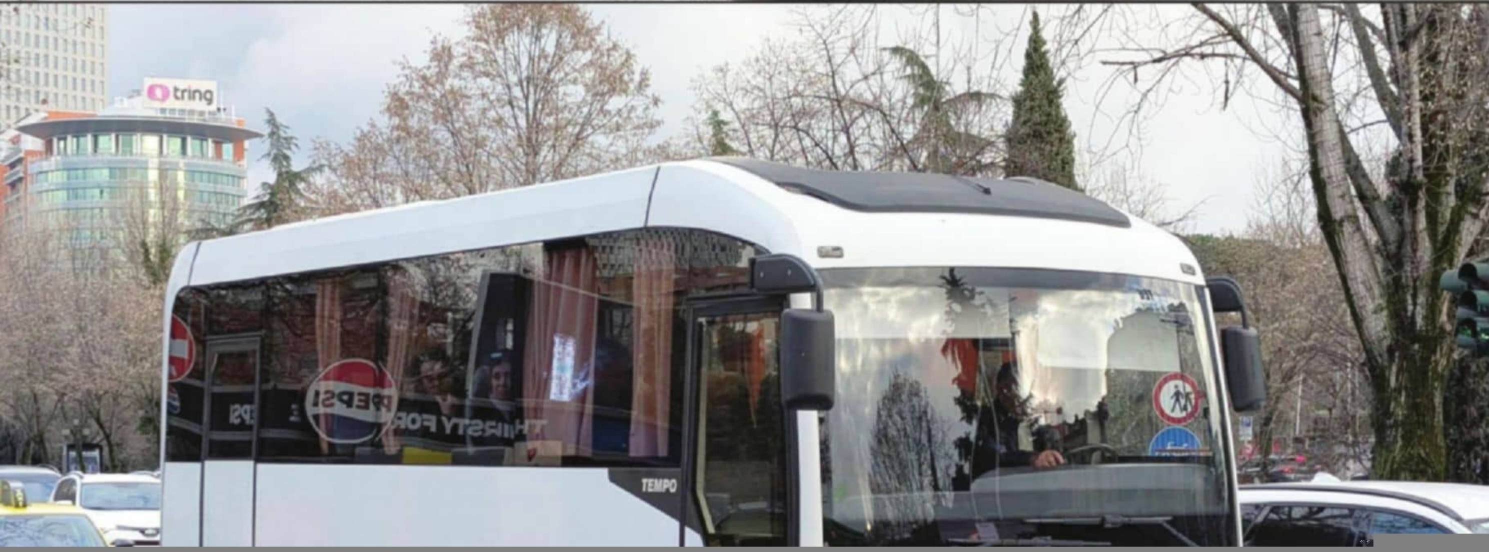
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